

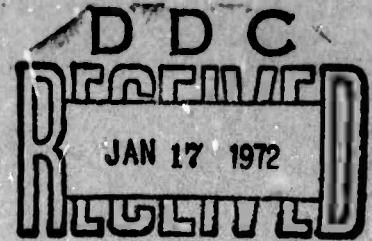
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RM-5784-ARPA
APRIL 1970

LAND REFORM AND THE QUALITY OF PROPAGANDA IN RURAL VIETNAM

Michael Arnsten and Nathan Leites



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**LAND REFORM AND THE QUALITY OF
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Michael Arnsten and Nathan Leites

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PREFACE

This Memorandum is a study of possible economic reforms in South Vietnam -- in particular, land reform, which has been proposed by the Government of Vietnam (GVN) since the spring of 1969 -- and of an appropriate message that would explain the advantages of the new GVN land policy, if suitably implemented, over that of the Communist Party. The research reported on in this Memorandum was completed in October 1969.

We call the reader's attention to the critical examination (pp. 54-65) of arguments by E. J. Mitchell, formerly of The Rand Corporation, which have been used against proponents of land reform. We are grateful to T. P. Schultz of Rand for permission to summarize his recent statistical work, which shows that most of the statistical associations originally reported by Mitchell vanish upon closer examination.

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1. INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

THE SECTIONS

This Memorandum is a brief study of rural life in North and South Vietnam, and of a number of U.S. and GVN non-military policies intended to "win the hearts and minds" of the farmers. Each of the three major sections that follow can be read independently of the others. In Section II, drawing on a small sample of Government of Vietnam propaganda, we show what may be characteristic violations of elementary rules of successful persuasion. For example, from a normative point of view, abstract words should not be used unless they are capable of evoking appropriate emotions in the audience; allegations about one-self or the enemy should not diverge widely from the facts as the target population sees them. These and other canons of persuasion seem to be frequently violated by the GVN.

To the best of the authors' knowledge, there have been no serious studies of the quality of life in rural North Vietnam in the 1960s, the prevalent stereotypes held on this subject among non-specialists being either black or white. In Section III, Glimpses of Rural Life Under the Party, Rand interviews¹ with prisoners and ralliers who have lived on Northern collectives have been drawn upon to depict negative and positive aspects of life as experienced by farmers living under the Party.²

In Section IV we examine a number of U.S.-preferred economic programs designed to "win the hearts and minds" of the population, and attempt to show that they are unlikely to achieve some of the desired effects, for one or more of the following reasons:

1. GVN promises for economic reform may not be believed, and even actual improvements may be viewed as temporary concessions, to

¹An extensive body of information is contained in the AG-, DT-, G-, K-, and PIZ-series of Rand interviews, made over the period 1964-1967.

²The Party refers to the PRP in the South and/or the Lao Dong in the North.

be followed by a relapse into more traditional behavior once the Party's threat has vanished. The population may be more inclined to believe that reforms are genuine if they are and appear to be hard to reverse.

2. Some reforms are unlikely in the short run to benefit the poor and most of the middle-class farmers, who constitute the overwhelming majority of the rural population.

In Section IV we also note that although the United States has proposed, and to some extent supported, a number of programs ostensibly designed to raise the rural standard of living, land reform has been until 1969 conspicuous by its absence. We examine some of the arguments used by American officials to forestall proposals for a new land reform in Vietnam, and present a number of suggestions which the GVN may find useful if it carries out the presently discussed plans for an extensive redistribution of riceland.

THE COMMON THEME

Although each Section is self-contained, a common theme becomes apparent in Section IV. American analyses of the war have been concerned mostly with the use of force and with reducing the flow of resources to the enemy. On the other hand, many programs designed "to win the hearts and minds" of the population have failed to focus on what would seem to be the central question: How does the rural audience compare the GVN's case with that of its adversary, and by what combination of deeds and words could the government's competitive position be improved?

So long as the level of violence remains high, the outcome of the war does not directly depend on the preferences of the population. Nevertheless, the efficiency with which either of the opponents converts his resources and manpower into activities designed to defeat his enemy depends, among other factors, on his ability not merely to coerce but to persuade the population to behave in a manner dictated by the contender's goals, even if these actions are in conflict with the individual's personal and short-range goals.

All too often we recognize the important factors contributing to an adversary's successes (and, of course, failures) much more clearly than our own. Thus our studies -- many conducted at Rand -- reveal the salient role of persuasion in the activities of the Party. Our adversary in Vietnam allocates substantial resources to the never-ending task of reshaping the feelings and thoughts of the farmers until they function effectively under the stress of combat. Depending on the individual's potential, goals range from creating a totally committed fighter, and ultimately a Party member, to the temporary mobilizing of those who in the long run will remain uncommitted. Insisting on the primacy of the "human element" over technology and expertness, the Party never forgets that motivated men use resources more efficiently than unmotivated men; that it may be easier to teach a motivated man skills than to motivate an expert; and that within limits, high morale can counterbalance superiority in weapons.

Prior to the anticipated de-escalation -- the sooner, the better -- the GVN, if it is prudent, must design a message and begin instituting reforms that would improve the comparison between itself and the Party.

Shortcomings of GVN Propaganda

American officials in South Vietnam have upon occasion called attention to the poor performance of GVN propaganda. In 1967 one analysis concluded that "the GVN has not been effective in establishing the idea that the VC take away, while the government offers progress." In particular, the Vietnamese Information Service, whose principal function is to promote "the virtues of the government," because of its uninspired activities is the subject of "almost universal opprobrium" and is "at best marginally effective."

In a typical diagnosis, U.S. officials blame the shortcomings on poor motivation, training, and organization and recommend that the

Vietnamese Information Service be "revitalized, reorganized, retrained, and upgraded" -- a diagnosis and recommendation which seem to be a frequent response of American officials to the inadequate performance of any civil or military organization in South Vietnam.¹ There is a sheer demand for higher performance -- an implicit affirmation that a set of unspecified changes in organization and training exists which would rapidly and radically improve effectiveness.

In this study some of the shortcomings of GVN propaganda are traced to its style (Section II) as well as to the difficulty of finding effective themes, so long as the GVN remains unreconstructed. (Because the task of the propagandist is limited to manipulating words and not changing reality, we are not addressing ourselves primarily to him.)

Substance

During World War II, the governments of Western Europe and the United States told their citizens that victory would preserve and improve, and a defeat deprive them of, cherished aspects of their way of life. After the war, successful anticommunist propaganda vividly and in detail compared the odious life in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe with vastly preferable conditions in the West.

GVN propagandists also are charged with contrasting the "new" or "n.racuous" -- in the language of Revolutionary Development -- life under the GVN with deprivations imposed by the Party. Western propagandists, trained during World War II and the recent Cold War, are apt to advise the Vietnamese to pattern their efforts after the Western model. But the task of the GVN propagandist is more difficult in two respects:

1. (a) Communist rule in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, as well as (b) the governments and (c) the people of Western Europe, all

¹For example, the performance of Revolutionary Development cadres, Popular and Regional Forces, ARVN, and the agencies charged with the task of "rooting out" the infrastructure.

three differ in significant ways from the Lao Dong Party, the GVN, and the rural Vietnamese, respectively. These differences may impose narrow limits even on skillful GVN propagandists. In most of Asia it is difficult to demonstrate that life for the poor and middle farmers, who constitute the majority of the rural population, would deteriorate -- from their own point of view -- under a communist regime. In Vietnam the difficulty is compounded by the dominant role played by the Vietnamese Communist Party in liberating the country from foreigners and defending it against them.

2. After many years of often glaring disparity between the government's words and its actions (or inactions), many in South Vietnam have probably learned to discount GVN assertions and promises. To overcome immunity to words was a major task of Allied propagandists in World War II. Because propaganda, to be effective, must be credible, the British, for example, strove to establish "a reputation for objectivity and integrity by a calculated policy of admitting defeats...and (they) had learned to tone down or even suppress news, even if (they) believed it to be true, which would sound incredible to people living under Nazi rule."¹ For the same reason, GVN statements should be essentially true, if possible, verifiable, and usually restrained; predictions should be sober and plausible.

In general, as N. D. Lasswell observed, "words without deeds are sooner or later falsified, even as deeds without words are often misunderstood."² In Vietnam, because by now few words are believed and the superiority of the GVN's way of life over the Party's -- in terms of the population's preferences -- is not so great as one would wish, successful persuasion may presuppose GVN reforms that would quickly, dramatically, and irrevocably begin to improve the life of the poorer farmers in the South; in Section IV we point out that an extensive

¹Grossman, in Lerner, Sykes, pp. 335-336. See the Bibliography at the end of this report for full bibliographical references.

²Ibid., p. 255.

redistribution of riceland in the South would be an example of this kind of reform.¹ The GVN would then be able to argue, justifiably so, that its reform is vastly preferable to the NLF and North Vietnamese agrarian policies.

As a consequence of this, the GVN propagandist could begin to argue much more plausibly that the observed condition of the Northern farmer foreshadows the desolate life the Southerner would lead if the Party were victorious throughout Vietnam. A thorough knowledge of the life in the North is a prerequisite for this task. Though Section III is only an initial contribution to a subject on which information is at best sketchy, we have tried to identify those points of contrast between the two ways of life -- under the GVN and under the Party -- that could be used by the GVN to its advantage in a message to the rural population.

¹Many other reforms -- some are implied in the Memorandum -- are called for.

II. THE STYLE OF PROPAGANDA

A small sample -- limited to translations at our disposal and therefore not necessarily representative -- of statements made by the GVN since 1954 about itself and its opponent shows numerous violations of elementary rules of successful propaganda. For example, propaganda statements should emphasize terms that are concrete and refer to aspects of life deemed important by the targets. Vague, abstract words should not be used unless they are capable of evoking appropriate emotions in the audience.

The Party, for example, is able to charge such vague abstractions as "class struggle" and "imperialism" with power to evoke emotions. As a first step, the Party encourages the farmer to vent all his grievances against the landlord and Nationalist officers.¹ In the China of the 1960s, the young soldiers who had never lived under the Kuomintang regime attended meetings at which the men from the villages often eloquently described the injustices of the past. The cadres conducting the meetings had been told: "...the soldiers must be led to understand that the hardships of the poor are endless, the workers of the world belong to the same family, and the reactionary forces are the deadly enemy of the workers. Personal animosity must be interlocked with the animosity of the entire working class of the world."²

GVN STATEMENTS ABOUT ITSELF

GVN Philosophies

From Diem's time to the present, the GVN has had a predilection for constructing "philosophies" designed to serve as antidotes to the enemy's faith. These attribute to the GVN a variety of abstract qualities that are unlikely to evoke any emotions in the rural population.

¹See Lifton, Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism, p. 394 (emphasis added).

²See Cheng, The Politics of the Chinese Red Army, p. 109.

Personalism under Diem was heavy with syncretisms composed of traditional Confucian words, of borrowings from the language used by the French in Indochina, and also of obscure innovations derived from foreign sources such as the French left Catholic Emmanuel Mounier. In the words of a Vietnamese writer:

The official philosophy of the strategic hamlet was based on a series of tripartite concepts leading toward personalism, and expressed in the form of equations, thus: three aspects of self reliance + three aspects of consciousness = three aspects of personalism = personalism.¹

As "Revolutionary Development" replaced strategic hamlets, a new "philosophy," Chung-Thuy, replaced personalism. Major Be, the head of the training program for the Revolutionary Development cadres, writes:

We must adopt a revolutionary philosophy if we want to reconstruct our Country. This philosophy must not be an abstract Spiritualism or Personalism, but must be based on a fundamental human value "Chung-Thuy." Elements of Science, Ethics, Spiritualism, and Personalism are found in this philosophy.²

The latest catechism in which the future "cadres" attending the school at Vung Tau are "motivationally trained" continues the tradition.

Q. What does the new spirit consist of?

A. It consists of:

1. A union between the people and the government which brings about strength and power to the village and hamlet.
2. An open heartedness which constitutes a precondition for the basic freedoms of men.
3. A moral spirit which highlights the five cardinal virtues of benevolence, righteousness, civility, knowledge, and loyalty.³

¹Dang, Viet-Nam: Politics and Public Administration, p. 160.

²Nguyen-Be, Study of the New Essence of Life, "Chung-Thuy," p. 10. Chung-Thuy literally means "the end -- the beginning." It designates either sincerity or the injunction "Think before you act." The Chung-Thuy philosophy, according to the author, is applicable to every area of human activity. For example, "The Chung-Thuy philosophy would be a field manual which...would insure military victory" (p. 42).

³Vung Tau School, Guide Book, 50 questions and answers concerning RD activities, pp. 3, 4.

The GVN "Revolution"

After years of use and abuse, an abstract word may lose its power to inform and move an audience. It may even acquire a meaning opposite to the one it had originally and which recommended its use. From Diem's days to the present, the GVN has continued to use "revolutionary" and "revolution," claiming to sponsor a movement that would bring into existence an embodiment of "personalism" or, under the present regime, of the "new spirit." Diem's Can Lao party stated:

The Personalist Revolution is a new philosophy, aiming at the complete liberation of man, at a revolution in thought and environment, in order to create physical and moral conditions proper to the full development of man.¹

A historian of the many pacification programs writes:

Revolution has been an overworked word in South Vietnam. The Ngo regime countered the communist claim to the term by its own "Personalist revolution." Subsequent regimes further abused the concept by their unfulfilled promises.²

This word "revolution," through constant usage, has lost all meaning even to Nighswonger himself, who proceeds to give his definition: "... revolution refers to a process of fundamental, orderly change in the life of the peasant."³ According to Webster, evolution is a "process of gradual and relatively peaceful social, political, and economic advance or amelioration, often contrasted with revolution."

¹Quoted in Volume I of a two-volume unpublished Rand translation of Tran Van Giau, South Vietnam Keeps Firm the Copper Wall, p. 228. The North Vietnamese propagandist quotes extensively from the South Vietnamese press. This quotation is typical of Personalist pronouncements; see J. C. Donnell, Politics in South Vietnam: Doctrines of Authority in Conflict.

²Nighswonger, Rural Pacification in Viet Nam: 1962-1965, p. 305.

³Ibid.

GVN Pacification

The publicity given the 1959 agroville program illustrates the marked discrepancy between the goals the government sought and those it claimed to be seeking. Diem's newspaper, National Revolution, affirmed in 1959:

One can say that the agroville is a monument to a new revolutionary way of life, bringing miraculous results impossible to imagine.¹

The overstatement makes the passage suspect even to those who have never heard of Diem and the agrovilles. Because the results are impossible to imagine, the author need not describe the concrete benefits.

Second, the main motive behind the new policy was security:

...the agrovilles, besides preventing access to the peasantry, were established in strategic areas, usually along a main road or water axis, which obstructed [the Communists'] free movement.²

The new policy, instead of providing the promised benefits, imposed many hardships on the relocated peasants.

Most peasants, however, saw the agroville program quite differently.... They had to prepare the sites, without pay and often providing their own tools, which meant building access roads, digging wide surrounding canals and interior interlacing canals, and distributing the vast amount of earth thus removed so as to provide raised foundations for houses and other buildings.... The peasant was asked, or, in most cases, compelled to abandon his old homestead...for a desolate plot of ground in a strange place. He had to build his new house from materials taken from his old one, and his only help from the government was the gift of about \$5.50 and the offer of an agricultural loan.... The peasant had to pay for the acre and a half of land he had been allotted. Whatever he thought of having neighbors and administrative services close at hand, he did not like the long

¹Quoted in Tran, The Copper Wall, Vol. I, p. 319.

²Scigliano, South Vietnam: Nation Under Stress, p. 180.

distance which he generally had to walk to his rice fields. Many people resisted entering the agrovilles or went into them with great reluctance.¹

The GVN wanted to construct the agrovilles, at some cost to the relocated population, in order to deny resources to the insurgents. It said it was acting for the benefit of the population, but the promised benefits were implausible to begin with and soon turned out to be false.

Enhancing the GVN Image

Current pacification doctrine is all too often more concerned with the creation of a "desirable GVN image" or with "enhancing the government's prestige" than with the intrinsic worth of fundamental changes in GVN policies and their implementation.² When the immediate purpose assigned to the "implementation of civic action activities" should be "to really satisfy the people's legitimate aspirations," this objective may be pursued -- in the words of an American official -- "so as to enhance the government's prestige."³ If a government policy benefiting the population is motivated by a genuine concern with their welfare rather than by a desire to manipulate them, it may be more effective in changing the population's reactions toward the contending sides, because the population believes that with the defeat of the insurgency the need to manipulate will disappear.

The concern with "image" is epitomized in the stress put on the black pajamas of the RD cadres. The Viet Cong wear these peasant clothes not only because they are cheaper than uniforms but also, and above all, because the pajamas make it difficult to distinguish them from the population at large. The black pajamas may then secondarily appear as an expression of the NLF's closeness to the people. With the RD cadres the only purpose -- and hence probably one that is but weakly served -- of imitating the NLF's dress is to impress upon the people the contention that the GVN, too, is close to the people.

¹Ibid., pp. 179-180.

²Vung Tau School, p. 104.

³Ibid.

Such simplicity may appear as masquerade if the RDs in reality desire to dress well.¹ "Do not wear expensive and showy clothes," cadres-in-training have to be admonished at Vung Tau, "which can make the people envy [the cadres] and hence lament their lot."² Such lack of sincerity in manipulators is apt to communicate itself unwittingly to the rural audience who prize unfeigned behavior.³ And however large the discrepancy between public words and private doctrine among the enemy, distance from "the people" is condemned in thoughts and feelings of the cadres as well as in their actions.

GVN STATEMENTS ABOUT THE FRONT

Abstract words used to describe the Front must be translated into vivid images of odious life under communism or into equally concrete images of highly valued aspects of rural life under the GVN that would disappear if communism were victorious. Although the word "communism" did denote a vivid threat to a large majority of Western Europeans during the postwar period, it has strong meaning only for that minority of the rural population in Vietnam who have lost property or members of the family as a consequence of Viet Minh or Viet Cong acts, or are threatened because they are relatively wealthy or connected with the GVN, or who belong to religions -- mainly Catholicism and Hoa Hao -- whose hierarchies tend to be hostile toward the communists. However, the GVN appears to take it for granted that the majority of the population is horrified by "communism," which is then condemned without much of an attempt to show any deleterious effects it might have for the poor or middle farmer.

¹Some RDs are "dread dodging 'cowboys' who gun into Saigon on their Hondas every weekend." (E. Pond, an interview with Major Be, The Christian Science Monitor, November 30, 1967.)

²Vung Tau School, p. 131.

³In Confucian tradition sincerity is the congruence between one's proper conduct and one's spontaneous feelings.

According to an observer of rural Vietnam,

Very little is seen in local newspapers portraying the Communists as a menace to the people. It is necessary to provide...constant...propaganda...to convince the RF/PF and civilian population of the effect of a VC victory.¹

In a village observed by R. M. Pearce:

The government propaganda, when it did reach the village...spoke of the "Communist threat" and other ...political terms which the average villager could not even begin to comprehend.²

A song of the Revolutionary Development cadres contains the following verses: "Sing for combat hamlets against slavery and against old Ho."³ But "slavery" is never translated into an image of a horrible life or contrasted to the free life under the GVN. And although the song assumes that "old Ho" is evil, he is remembered by many -- to make the assumption most favorable to the GVN -- as the virtuous leader of the Resistance against the French.

To determine which of the themes contrasting the way of life under the GVN and under communism can be exploited by GVN propaganda, we examine in Sections III and IV a number of policies of the GVN and the Party and describe how they affected the lives of farmers in North and South Vietnam during the period from 1954 to 1964. We shall argue that in some areas the differences are limited, whereas in others they are relatively large but not necessarily highly valued by the rural population. Also some deprivations may occur under the communist regime but may in part be compensated for by gains in other areas.

¹P. Worchel et al., Preliminary Report on a Socio-Psychological Study of Regional/Popular Forces, Viet-Nam, p. 7.

²R. M. Pearce, Evolution of a Vietnamese Village, p. 30.

³Vung Tau School, p. 165.

III. GLIMPSES OF RURAL LIFE UNDER THE PARTY

LEGITIMACY AND NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE

The authors believe that it is easier to make a case for the legitimacy of the North Vietnamese government and the NLF than for that of the GVN. Although the Viet Minh were dominated by the Party, to a significant extent they also appeared as a national movement to liberate Vietnam from the French. During the August Revolution in 1945, Bao Dai abdicated, conferred the imperial regalia on Chairman Ho, and accepted the post of Counsellor to the new government. In the words of M. Sacks, he thus "signified to the . . . Vietnamese people . . . that the new Democratic Republic of Viet Nam now had the mandate of heaven."¹ And the insurgents in the South, even before the formation of the NLF, represented themselves as the "resistance" against America and Diem. Ever since the summer of 1945 only the presence or a threat of a return of foreign soldiers has kept the Party from power. However limited the potential of U. S. leverage over the GVN, or however incomplete the use the United States has made of this potential, to the ordinary Vietnamese -- and even to the political class in Saigon -- only the Party appears to have harmoniously combined the will for power with the aspiration to national independence, while the GVN appears constrained, or eager, to sacrifice the latter so as to maintain the former.

The allegation of Peking's suzerainty over Hanoi is probably false, and certainly implausible, given the absence of any visible events that might be presented as evidence for it. The visibility of Americans in the South is in striking contrast to the seclusion of foreign advisers in the North.² In postwar Germany, it was

¹Quoted by Buttinger, Vietnam; A Dragon Embattled, Vol. 1, p. 606.

²"The Americans are seen about everywhere. They mingle too freely into the daily life of the Vietnamese people. The Chinese and Russians didn't act like that in the North. There were many of them in the North. They lived in many towns, but they kept to themselves. Seldom did they take a walk in the streets or were they seen in groups on the streets. Whenever they went somewhere, they went by car and fast. The Chinese

apparent to everyone that the communist regime in East Germany was a puppet of the Soviet Union; therefore, opposition to the communists in East and West Germany was in part a consequence of national feeling.

Though it might have taken the Party much longer to induce a withdrawal of France had they not received massive military aid from China since 1950, the relinquishment of the North to the Party in 1954 appeared (correctly) to be due to the skill and devotion of both the cadres and the masses organized by them. And today to a naive and an informed observer alike, the massive American presence in the South cannot but dwarf the insubstantial Chinese presence in the North.

PROPER CONDUCT OF THE COMPETING AUTHORITIES¹

In contrast to Eastern Germany, which came into existence in the zone where Soviet soldiers had looted and raped, and whose survival depended on their continued presence, there is near-unanimous agreement in Vietnam that the behavior of the cadres, whether in the North or in the South, is to a marked degree morally superior to that of GVN officials.

A rallier who was an important district cadre explains why the population of a village supported the Front:

In my opinion, the people thought they were then enjoying "real democracy" because the cadres behaved nicely towards them. Before, the villagers bent their heads and were scared whenever they met with GVN officials. Since their village had been liberated, the cadres' behavior and way of addressing them was different from that of GVN officials and the peasants were so pleased with the change that they thought it was "real democracy." As a consequence, they felt more at ease when they dealt with the Front's cadres.²

workers who were working on bridges and roads in the North lived by themselves in one separated area and rarely let themselves be seen." AG-534.

¹A systematic contrast of the conduct of the two competing authorities can be found in N. Leites, The Viet Cong Style of Politics.

²DT-135, Deputy Chief of the District Propaganda, Culture and Indoctrination Section.

Both authorities may, in their respective efforts at persuasion, accuse each other of excessive harshness. But the Party depicts GVN officials as systematically engaging in self-seeking, corruption, wanton cruelty, and humiliation;¹ and the GVN does not dare accuse the opponent of similar transgressions. To allege that Ho Chi Minh, Pham Van Dong, Giap, Truong Chinh, or Le Duan had pocketed government money or been connected with gambling or prostitution would, in Southern public opinion, be outlandish -- even among Catholics or Hoa Hao. Such possibilities, probabilities, or even certainties with regard to Saigon officials are taken for granted; denials are expected, but not believed. There are similar parallels for all lower levels of the two hierarchies, right down to the hamlet.

RELIGION UNDER COMMUNISM

In the West the advent of communism could plausibly be presented as damaging to religion. For instance, accounts of the desecration of churches and murder of priests and nuns during the Spanish Civil War, correct or exaggerated, could be used in the campaign preceding the crucial elections held in Italy in the spring of 1948 as a fore-taste of the life in the West under communist rule. It is more difficult to make an issue of religious freedom in Vietnam.

The NLF seeks to include representatives of the various religions (Buddhism, Cao Dai, Hoa Hao, Catholicism) at all levels of its Front.² They are all in the NLF Central Committee, and always present; and in a presumably typical village, "cadres," according to an informant who had been one of them,

come around and try to have the leaders of the religious organizations participate in the NLF, since they always say that it includes all components of society. If the

¹Major Be told E. Pond that "social injustice and corruption must be rooted out (in the GVN). The Viet Cong must not be given a monopoly of virtue in this sphere." The Christian Science Monitor, November 30, 1967. (Our emphasis.)

²Pike, Viet Cong, pp. 421-431.

Cao Dai or Buddhists become members or cadres of the NLF, they must operate under the guidance of the cadres, not¹ independently. They organized that very skillfully....

At the same time the cadres try to convince the population living in NLF areas that they should abandon religion. Recalling that the Viet Minh and the Viet Cong "have been working hard to reshape the minds of the people for more than 20 years," a peasant landowner indicates that "their cadres have been working among the religiously inclined people to persuade them that religion is nothing but superstition and intoxication coming from the imperialists in order to lull the people and paralyze their resistance to the imperialists." The effort may well be successful, as in the case of a village in the Camau peninsula about which a former inhabitant reports: "Since 1945, the people have been used to the people in control of the village...so they just ignore the practice of going to pagoda."²

But the Party is not apt to go beyond intensive and prolonged persuasion. "The NLF cadres do not like church-goers," an informant reports, "but instead of stopping the villagers from going, they only come to their houses and try to reeducate them." "The Front," according to a cadre of long standing, "now uses stronger measures than those of the Resistance War." But while they "strongly criticized it," they didn't "stop believers from going to pagoda or church, because it would cause resentment in the hearts of the villagers. . . . It does not bring any profit to the NLF to stop people from worshipping their gods while the Front needs help from the villagers."³

Yet, the persistent persuasion may become harassment. According to a Catholic landowner residing in an area under NLF control, "When the NLF took control in 1960-61, they asked Father [Catholic] to come to their headquarters in the village and asked him many questions in

¹PIE 73:75 (number and question of Pearce interviews).

²PIE 24:3, 38:4.

³PIE 14:13, 3:23 and 19:82.

order to secure his support. This happened many times, and he felt that living here was impossible, so he left the village."¹

In what may be a particularly appealing theme the cadres argue that expensive ceremonies should be simplified at least during wartime:

(i) According to a village landowner, the cadres "reprove the expenses of the celebration and coerce the family to reduce them as much as possible while the country is at war."

(ii) "We worship our dead parents as usual and the familiar celebrations were not forbidden," remarked a peasant landowner on the situation in his village. "At present the NLP men advise us not to do anything on a large scale and to try to avoid gathering people because it may bring misfortune to us...."²

Students of China have called attention to differences between the traditional roles of organized religions in the European and Chinese societies, and the policies of Soviet and Chinese Communist Parties toward religions.³ In contrast to the West, Buddhism and Taoism in Republican China had only small financial resources, did not have powerful and centralized priesthoods, and did not participate in charity, education, and enforcement of moral discipline. The Soviet Communist Party has emphasized the irreconcilable conflict between religion and communism and has branded as false the thesis of "peaceful coexistence" between the two. In China the Party persecuted those believers who were unwilling to reconcile their faith with loyalty to the Party, but welcomed alliances between religious groups and communist organizations.⁴ The Party fought those religious

¹PIE 32:2.

²PIE 24:5, 95:10.

³The paragraph is based on "General Aspects of Chinese Communist Religious Policy, with Soviet Comparisons," Rensselaer W. Lee, III, The China Quarterly, July-September 1964, pp. 161-173.

⁴Scattered anti-religious riots in China occurred occasionally at the local level but they were not organized or directed by the Party. But in the border provinces, Islam and Lamaism, which gave strong sanction to the local social and political institutions, were attacked by the Party. C. K. Yang, Religion in Chinese Society, p. 392.

superstitions which it viewed as obstacles to the economic policies but tolerated the "integrated religious systems."¹

With the exception of the Catholics and the Hoa Hao, the religions have had a limited role in Vietnamese society. The MLF policies toward religions seem to resemble the Chinese rather than the Soviet model and may, as the Chinese developments show, remain unchanged after the war. If the MLF were to rule in the South, the treatment of the Catholics and the Hoa Hao would depend on their willingness to abdicate from their political role.

USE OF FORCE, COERCION, AND PERSUASION

Violence During the Northern Land Reform

During "land reform" campaigns conducted in North Vietnam in 1953-1956, many rich peasants and landlords were expropriated and, after a "trial" in front of the village population, sentenced to imprisonment or death. A former American communist reported on the trial of a landlord:

'Mong admit it!' cried the peasant women... 'Mong admit it!' cried the hundreds of onlookers. Crawlingly the assassin turned to the Judicial Committee, and said: 'Your little one admits everything.'²

According to Hoang Van Chi:

From colonialism to communism the total number of victims of the land reform campaigns has never been made public, but if we are to believe M. Gerard Tongas, a French professor who remained in Hanoi up to 1959, and who claimed to have accurate information: 'This indescribable butchery resulted in one hundred thousand deaths.' It seems that Ho Chi Minh was engaging in genocide.³

¹In Kwantung province only men repaired river dikes because, according to local folklore, participation of women might cause the collapse of the dikes. The Party mobilized the women and staged propaganda meetings to demonstrate the fallacy of the superstition. *Ibid.*, p. 389.

²Starobin, *Eyewitness in Indo-China*, quoted by Bernard Fall in "Spring in Triumphant...."

³Hoang Van Chi, From Colonialism to Communism, pp. 166, 190.

According to Fall:

...best-educated guesses on the subject are that probably close to 50,000 North Vietnamese were executed in connection with the land reform and that at least twice as many were arrested and sent to forced labor camps.¹

According to Buttinger:

It is generally believed that the number killed was between 10,000 and 15,000 and that between 50,000 and 100,000 were deported and imprisoned.²

Ten years later, the above-quoted rallier working as a GVN propaganda agent traveled from village to village in South Vietnam telling the rural population that "3624 men were killed" in six months of the Northern land reform.³

The "land reform" campaign in the middle 1950s seems, from the meager evidence available, to have been the only occasion on which the party in power has used violence on a large scale. Since that time the visible use of force in the North has been very low, perhaps because the population remembers these extreme events and believes that the Party would not hesitate to use force again, if persuasion and threats fail to exact compliance.⁴

One would expect that such extreme events would be incessantly and emphatically recalled by GVN propaganda, but that is by no means the case.⁵ The GVN, refusing radical land reforms, may not want to

¹ Fall, Two Viet-Nams, pp. 155-156.

² Buttinger, Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled, Vol. II, p. 914.

³ AG-231, Supplement A. This particular informant-propagandist selected the lowest estimate in the range.

⁴ From the hundreds of interviews examined, we cannot recall mention of the use of force after the end of the land-reform campaign. From what we know of other communist regimes, it seems unlikely that substantial levels of repression would have left no trace in the kind of materiel available in the West.

⁵ Hoang Ven Chi described the Northern land-reform campaign in his book, From Colonialism to Communism. After his return from North Vietnam, he served under Diem in the Information Ministry. (He coined the term "Viet Cong" to replace the term "Viet Minh.") He reports, in an internal Rand document, that under Diem there was no attempt to inform

remind "very poor" and "poor" peasants -- who stand in little danger of being misclassified as "rich" or as "landlords" -- that they would benefit materially if the South followed the Northern example. They might be more deeply impressed by their own interests than by the suffering of the "rich," past or even future.

Life in the North: "Voluntarism"

A rallier, returnee from North Vietnam, and commander of a GVN Armed Propaganda Unit, tells about his approach to the villagers: "There is no sophistication in my talks, nor flowery language in my speeches, only the truth about the conditions of living in the North." A major theme of his is:

You have to be in the North to understand the vicious intentions of the communists; they stopped at nothing to gain their objectives.... The people there are being urged or forced to do two or three days' work in one.¹

But how did the communists exact this arduous labor from the population? "They took advantage of our warm hearts." More particularly, "They were very clever and subtle. For example, in each agricultural worksite they posted two or three loudspeakers. If I carried 50 Kg., the loudspeakers boomed with praise, 'Long live Z, a worthy cadre of the party.' I was so overwhelmed and my personal pride got the better of me. I tried to carry 60 Kg.... Then I tried 100 Kg. I was praised as the 'labor hero of the agricultural worksite.'"²

rural Vietnam about the land reform and subsequent collectivization in the North. He writes, "Almost no one in South Vietnam actually knows much, if anything, about the North Vietnamese land reform; letters from the North are censored and oblique. The Catholics left before the Viet Minh arrived in villages and no one could leave afterwards. Diem and the GVN were not interested in informing the peasants about North Vietnam's regime."

We know of no survey designed to probe the extent of the Southern farmers' knowledge of the life in the Northern cooperative. With the exception of the above-mentioned rallier-propagandist, we have seen no indication that Diem's successors were less reluctant to inform the farmer about Northern land reform and collectivization.

¹AG-231, Supplement.

²AG-231, Supplement.

The preferred procedure is to make citizens "volunteer" to do what the Party wants them to do. "The citizen being persuaded understands...that threats lie behind...[the] arguments of the cadre, but the threats remain implicit."¹ The intensity with which the individuals, himself, eventually wants to do what is expected of him varies, but apparently is often non-negligible.

This, as Vogel points out, is "an adaptation and expansion of a traditional concern for winning the cooperation of the population. In the villages of old China...elder educated citizens lectured the others to explain the ethical concepts which underlay obedience to the state."² Hence this aspect of life in the North may seem proper to the Vietnamese peasant, rather than horrify him as a Westerner might suppose.

Levels of Coercion

According to a few informants it is not impracticable to refuse joining a cooperative, or even to leave it:

I did not join an agricultural cooperative because my wife was not healthy. She lacked strength to carry out the duties given by the cooperative. So I felt it more advantageous to stay apart.¹

Some left the cooperative...because some conflict had arisen between them and the co-op's Board of Directors.... Those who wanted to leave the co-op could freely do so and go and work independently on their own land.²

In any case, the threats that make those who would like to leave are not violent:

Joining the cooperative was not made compulsory, but in reality it was almost so because if I were a

¹Ezra F. Vogel, "Voluntarism and Social Control," p. 171.

²Ibid., p. 70.

³AG-628, item 13.

⁴A catholic "middle farmer," AG-446, item 26. According to a number of interviews, some farmers who choose to leave the co-op are given land, which may not be identical with the plot they owned before joining the co-op.

fisherman and I did not join the cooperative, I would not be able to sell my fish, and at the same time nobody would sell me their produce, no matter how much money I had. That was the reason why I don't think there was anybody who did not join the cooperative.¹

...No family could afford to work alone on its land, because no one ever owned all the necessary farm tools. His water buffalo sometimes got sick, or his plow might break. If all the other families in the hamlet joined the co-op, then when he needed their help, he wouldn't be able to get it. Buying fertilizer was another problem.... If he was a member of the co-op, fertilizer would be distributed to him. Non-members had to go through all sorts of red tape, to wait a long time, and then they were allowed to buy very little. Furthermore, if his piece of land was surrounded by the co-op land... he would have no way to take his water buffalo to his field. Those were the reasons which made all those who were reluctant to join the co-op join it anyway.... Necessities such as nuoc mam, cotton cloth, bread and soap couldn't be bought unless one was a member of the co-op.²

Or much more weakly:

There was no alternative to staying in the cooperative,³ because an independent farmer had to pay heavier taxes.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN THE NORTH

Raising income through economic development is a slow process in underdeveloped countries, whether under communist or noncommunist leadership. Those who do not discount the future at too high a rate may want to predict which of the two sides had a greater ability and determination to undertake economic development in the postwar years.

¹AG-449, item 21. The last sentence may be in error. Out of over 50 interviews in the G-series -- the series focuses on North Vietnamese agriculture -- there are two which refer to landowners. G-42 is a farmer who claims that until mid-1967 he worked on his father's farm, two mau in area. G-14 alleged that he worked as a farm laborer on land owned by a certain Mr. Bai.

A farmer or a fisherman unwilling to join or remain a member of a cooperative can seek employment in a factory, practice a trade, or the like.

²AG-480, item 25.

³AG-447, item 3.

If the economic policies of the GVN and the North during the period from 1954 to 1964 are indicators of future performance, the communists in power in the South, with some help from the Bloc countries, may be, and may appear to be, about as capable of eventually raising rural income through economic development as would the GVN with U.S. help.

Reconstruction in the North was a more formidable problem than in the South. The North had been looted by a Chinese army in 1945-1946, and most of the military activities during the war against the French took place in the North.

The Communist insistence on collectivization radically changed the traditional organization in the countryside. Between 1954 and 1956 the land was redistributed, and then the majority of the population was urged to join cooperatives. By the end of 1960, 85 percent of the farmers were members of cooperative farms, and in the early 1960s larger cooperatives were being formed. These radical changes in organization and incentives must have limited the ability to increase production.

Use of Foreign Aid

Between 1954 and 1960 the United States provided \$1.46 billion in economic aid to Vietnam. Very little of this aid was used to finance economic development. Eighty percent was used to subsidize imports of predominantly consumers' goods; the remainder was used to finance development projects. In the same period, economic aid from Bloc countries to the North was one-third of U.S. aid to the GVN; however, by 1960, 90 percent of North Vietnamese imports were capital goods.

Investment

Using North Vietnamese statistics and some guesses by economists working on Russian and Chinese national income, we estimate that in 1960 the net investment in North Vietnam was between 16 and 18 percent of net national product.¹ In the South this ratio rose from 1.8 percent

¹See Appendix A.

in 1956 to 4.8 percent in 1960. In the judgment of one U.S. economist, the ratio in the South should have risen to at least 10 percent.¹

Planning

The South failed to come up with a long-range policy of development based on technical planning of projects in agriculture and industry.² In the North, the Party showed a strong predilection for planning. Though initially the planned goals for agriculture were unrealistically optimistic, the planning in the 1960s was more sober and seemed to reflect an understanding of the complex task of developing Northern agriculture.³

Learning from Bloc Experience: The Northern Collective

In the judgment of R. Dumont, a French agronomist,⁴ who has studied Soviet, Chinese, and Cuban agriculture and who visited North Vietnam in 1964, the cooperative policies in the North are in several respects more sensible than those in other Bloc countries.

In the North after 1956, a gradual collectivization -- first labor exchange teams, then small cooperatives, followed by larger cooperatives at the hamlet and village level -- "appears to have been carried out with great wisdom, particularly if one compares the developments in the Soviet Union in 1929-33, in Eastern Europe in 1949-53, and in China in 1958."⁵ Rand interviews indicate that no violence was used during the transition to collective farming.

¹Child, Essays on Economic Growth, Capital Formation and Public Policy in Viet-Nam. At that time (1961), Child recommended that South Vietnam, because its population was increasing at a rate in excess of 3 percent per year, should invest a minimum of 10 percent and, preferably, 12 to 18 percent of its 1960 net national product.

²Ibid.

³Rene Dumont (Professor, National Institute of Agronomy, Paris), "Problèmes Agricoles au Nord-Vietnam," France-Asie, autumn 1965.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

Most of the vegetables, fruit, and livestock are produced privately by farmer families who sell them to the cooperatives and the State. In contrast to the Soviet Union, where water is furnished free of charge for irrigation, the North Vietnamese farmer has to pay and consequently has an incentive to conserve water. Contrary to the practice in the Soviet Union, in North Vietnam taxation of agricultural production furnishes an incentive for increasing production.

Vietnam has no history of great-leaps-forward into virgin territories. The North seems to have been aware that no single measure in isolation dramatically improves agricultural productivity, and that increases in yield occur as a consequence of many carefully orchestrated changes.

However, the North shares with the Bloc countries the unresolved problems of incentives and low labor productivity in cooperative agriculture. Because prior to 1965 there was underemployment in the countryside -- the cadres imposed a ceiling on the number of days a farmer was allowed to work for the cooperative -- increasing labor productivity was not at the time an urgent problem.

Improved Methods of Cultivation

No single measure in isolation dramatically improves rice yield. Changes in yield occur as a consequence of such measures as irrigation and drainage, use of a variety of fertilizers,¹ insecticides, better strains of rice, remedying deficiencies of poor soils, increasing depth of plowing, and spacing of seedlings. For example, North Vietnam concluded that the use of fertilizers and lime together with plowing 15 centimeters in depth gave good results. "However, the present buffalo-drawn plow cannot cut deeper than 8 centimeters."² Consequently, deeper plowing requires new plows and perhaps more draft animals.

¹Some of the soil additives used in North Vietnam are: farm manure, chemical fertilizers -- nitrogenous, phosphate and potassic -- lime, silt from ponds, river alluvium, and azolla, a plant growth between the rows of rice seedlings. Vietnamese Studies No. 13, p. 61, Hanoi, 1967.

²Vietnamese Studies No. 2, Hanoi, 1964. See also JPRS: 44,700, Agriculture in North Vietnam.

Some industrial development may have had to precede increased investment in agriculture. For example, fertilizer plants had to be built first. Improved yields in agriculture required production of better tools and mechanical pumps. Because of these scheduling problems, even if there had been no war, increases in agricultural production may not have been evident until the late 1960s.

According to R. Dumont, by 1964 most of the improvements in cultivation listed above were on the way to being realized, and increased production of fertilizers was the most urgent task ahead.

The planning of a system of measures designed to increase yields, not just on experimental pilot projects, requires extensive research.¹ And putting these new methods to use on the cooperative farms presupposes technical competence on the part of the cadres.

By the 1960s, the Party had developed extensive research facilities for study of improved cultivation of rice and other crops. A special effort was made to train agronomical engineers and technical cadres from the cooperatives. It is likely that, even if the Northern technology in agriculture is limited, innovations developed in the West -- such as the new strains of Philippine rice -- will some day be available in the South, whoever wins. Because promising laboratory innovations in agriculture sometimes tend to be disappointing when actually put to use by the Asian farmer, the North has the advantage of ten years of experience in applying new techniques on a mass scale. Also, the cadres, having shown great ability in persuading and coercing the Vietnamese farmers, would, if given some technical education, be an ideal instrument for changing the traditional pattern of agriculture.

¹According to Myrdal, Asian Drama, Vol. II, pp. 1281-1294, there has been too little research on practical methods of raising yields in South Asia. In particular he mentions the paucity of research on types and composition of Asian soils. He states: "the important point is that fertilizers, like other agricultural aids, will yield maximum results only if applied in the context of an overall improvement in farming methods."

Production

Table 1 shows North Vietnamese statistics on total production of paddy rice and secondary crops -- that is, corn, beans, sweet potatoes, and manioc or cassava -- in 1939 and in the period between 1958 and 1963.¹ 1958 is the first year after recovery from wartime damage and 1963 may be the last year before the war in the South began affecting the economy in the North.² The secondary crops were converted to paddy tonnage of equivalent caloric content.³

We include two estimates of 1939 production of paddy, because P. Gourou, writing on the eve of World War II, believed that the official French data underestimated paddy production. Because Gourou's doubts are probably little known today, the North's assessment of growth, based on lower 1939 estimate, has gained wide currency.⁴

In the period 1958-1963, the average production of paddy was 58 to 85 percent higher than the range of estimates of 1939 production. In the same period, production of secondary crops was more than three times as great as in 1939. Depending on which 1939 estimate of paddy production we use as a base, the average production of paddy and secondary crops, converted to paddy equivalent tonnage, rose by 75 to 100 percent.

These increases in rice production took place between 1954 and 1960. Between 1960 and 1964 -- the last year for which we have North Vietnamese data -- rice production remained constant, but the yearly

¹One kilogram of paddy rice yields .6 to .65 Kg of milled rice.

²Interviews state that, because of the war in the South, consumption in the North began decreasing in 1963-1964. Also the rate of total investment began declining slightly in 1963.

³We have used conversion factors used by North Vietnam. See Appendix B.

⁴North Vietnamese sources state the 1939 harvest "was one of the best in prewar years." However, it is possible, even likely, that French statistics underestimated the production of rice and secondary crops. P. Gourou argued that the Tonkin Delta alone produced 2.2 million tons of rice, and Northern Annam .5. Mountainous Tonkin, not mentioned by Gourou, must have produced less than .2. The total production would have been 2.9 million tons. See Gourou, L'Utilisation du Sol en Indochine Francaise.

Table 1

PRODUCTION OF PADDY RICE AND
SECONDARY CROPS IN NORTH VIETNAM
(millions of metric tons)

	Paddy Rice	Secondary Crops (paddy equivalent)	Paddy and Secondary Crops (paddy equivalent)
1939 Production			
a. Official French Estimate	2.47	.26	2.73
b. Gourou's Estimate	2.90	.26	3.16
Average Production, 1958-1963	4.58	.95	5.53

yield of secondary crops, expressed in rice-equivalent tonnage, more than doubled.

Recent Rand interviews provide information on changes in agricultural production during the years from 1965 through 1967.¹ Seventy percent of the respondents said that production increased and only 30 percent said that production remained unchanged or decreased. One third of the respondents reported increases in rice production ranging from 10 to 250 percent.² These increases took place despite the reduction of the labor force, the interruptions in work caused by bombing, and the difficulties in transporting chemical fertilizer and insecticides.³

The Party's Qualifications

Even under French rule agricultural production was more intensive in the North -- that is, increases in agricultural production as a function of investment would be greater in the South. Consequently, the Party, having had to cope with the complex problem of development in the North, may appear to be well qualified to undertake the easier task of development of Southern agriculture.

¹Out of the 40-odd interviews in the G-series on economic conditions in the North only 21 provided information on agricultural production.

In some cases the interviewers thought that the North Vietnamese were unwilling to admit that the production has deteriorated. Though the interviewers may be right in some cases, they themselves may be unwilling to believe that production in some areas has increased, partly because more Bloc chemical fertilizers became available in the last three years.

²In recent years some Northern farmers began growing three to four crops of rice with the aid of adequate fertilizers.

³Carl Kaysen's study points out that the average factory worker in the West knows little about his plant. But the member of a Northern cooperative has every incentive to know the annual output, because his income from the co-op depends on his share -- measured in work points -- of the total annual output, which is mostly in kind. Furthermore, he is praised when the quota assigned to the co-op is met or surpassed, and scolded whenever the output falls below the stipulated quota.

This information about increases in agricultural production in a number of co-ops during this period is in agreement with the claims made by North Vietnam in newspapers and radio broadcasts.

THE AUSTERE STANDARD OF LIVING IN THE NORTH

Because we lack the data, we are unable to compare the distributions of rural incomes in French Tonkin of the 1930s, and in the North and South of the early 1960s.¹ Consequently, we can present only gross estimates of the standard of living in terms of per capita consumption of rice and secondary crops and a range of subjective assessments by Northern farmers, as presented in Rand interviews.

Because of its large population and limited cultivated area, North Vietnam before World War II had to import rice from Cochinchina. The population of the North increased from 12 million in 1939 to 16 million in 1960, and perhaps to 18 million in 1964; according to North Vietnamese statistics, it grew at the rate of 3.5 percent annually, one of the highest rates in Asia.² Nevertheless, after 1954 the North became self-sufficient in food production.

The average per capita production of rice and secondary crops in the years from 1958 to 1963 represents an increase of 36 percent over the prewar period, if we use the official French estimates of 1939 production and rice imports, or a 20 percent increase, if we use Gourou's higher estimates of production. Even if there had been no increase in per capita production, it is possible that per capita consumption of many farmers would have increased, because in the post-war period income was more evenly distributed.

Though in 1964 the per capita area of riceland was 70 percent larger in the South than in the North, the per capita production of

¹We have Gourou's French data on income in Tonkin, and Stroup's data on income in rural South Vietnam of 1964.

²The 1939 estimate of population is consistent with the 1936 census data and the rate of increase of the population in the 1930s discussed by Gourou: "11.4 million in Tonkin and Northern Annam and increasing by 1.3 percent per year."

The U.S. Bureau of the Census believes that the 1960 North Vietnamese census underestimates the population and overestimated its rate of increase.

We have used official French and North Vietnamese data on population and its rate of increase.

basic foods, rice, secondary crops, and livestock and fish was approximately the same in both Vietnams. During the period from 1958 to 1963 the average per capita production of paddy in the South was less than 10 percent higher than in the North.¹ During the same period, the average annual per capita production of rice and secondary crops -- expressed in paddy rice equivalents -- was 320 Kg in the South and 340 Kg in the North.² The South had more cattle and a greater fish catch; the North had more hogs and poultry. See Tables 2 and 3.

Depending on body weight, climate, and the amount of work performed by the adults, it is possible to specify minimal food requirements. If the rations fall below the minimum, there will be loss of weight, increased susceptibility to diseases, and growing apathy. The average per capita daily minimum caloric requirement in Southeast Asia is 1,800, which corresponds to 280 Kg of paddy per year.³ If 20 percent of paddy production is not available for human consumption, of the 340 kilos of average yearly per capita production of paddy and secondary crops -- converted to equivalent paddy tonnage -- the remaining 270 kilos, available for consumption, almost fulfill the specified minimum caloric requirement.⁴ The population obtains additional calories and proteins from consumption of small amounts of meat, fish, fish sauce, fruit and vegetables.

¹The statistics for the South were taken from the USAID Annual Statistical Bulletin, 1967. The per capita production for the South is an average for the years mid-1957 through mid-1963. Despite the insurgency, the production of rice and secondary crops reached a peak during 1960-1963. The statistics for the South may be as unreliable as those for the North.

²We used the same conversion factors for secondary crops in calculating the total production in the North and in the South.

³C. Clark and M. Haswell, The Economics of Subsistence Agriculture, p. 14. Based on an eight-hour work day for adult workers. Here the estimates represent actual human consumption. Clark and Haswell's estimates are somewhat lower than minimum caloric requirements stipulated by the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, as quoted in Myrdal, Asian Drama, Vol. I, p. 544.

⁴USAID Annual Statistical Bulletin estimates that in the South 12 percent of the paddy is lost to rodents, insects, and to reduction in water content. Another 8 percent is reserved for seed, animal feed, and industrial uses.

Table 2
PER CAPITA PRODUCTION OF PADDY AND SECONDARY CROPS
IN THE NORTH AND SOUTH

	Per Capita Production in Kg/yr (average for 1958-1963)	
	Paddy	Paddy Plus Secondary Crops
North	280	340
South	300	320

Table 3
PER CAPITA PRODUCTION OF PADDY
AND SECONDARY CROPS IN THE NORTH

	Paddy and Secondary Crops (millions of metric tons)	Population (millions)	Per-capita Annual Production (kg)
1939 Production and Import: ^a			
1. French estimate	3.00	12	250
2. Gourou's estimate	3.40	12	285
Average Production (1958-1963)	5.50	16.2	340

Note:

^a250,000 tons of paddy were imported to Tonkin in 1939.

Though Rand interviews contain much information on economic conditions of the Northern farmer, it is difficult to go beyond the crude estimates of the standard of living discussed above. The respondent's assessment of his well-being depends on his aspirations, and on the social and economic standing of his family under the colonial rule. The cooperatives differ in the quality of the land under cultivation, the ratio of the cultivated area to the membership of the cooperative, and in the degree of efficiency with which the land is cultivated. The income of a family depends on the ratio of workers to the number of dependents, and on the diligence of the workers, because income from the cooperative is proportional to the quantity and quality of work. The rest of the family income is derived from private cultivation of vegetables, fruit, and livestock, and consequently depends on the enterprise of the family.

A better-off family receives more than enough rice from the cooperative and sells the surplus to the government. Secondary crops are raised on the family plot of ground and used as feed for livestock. They raise their own chickens, ducks, pork and vegetables. They consume one chicken every week, eggs and 30 Kg of pork per year.¹ Fresh fish is available whenever the cooperative organizes fishing in the neighboring ponds. Fish sauce and salt can be bought freely, but sugar is available only to the sick; however, a family may grow its own sugar cane. Consumers' goods are limited to essentials: kerosene, enough cloth for one or two pairs of pajamas per person per year, soap, fuel for cooking, matches, cooking utensils, and dishes. Radios and bicycles are only available to the cadres, though some respondents claimed that radios could be bought by the farmers after 1965. The family we have described is satisfied with its food rations and in all likelihood complains only about the shortage of consumers' goods.² (It is our impression that since 1965 a greater variety of consumers' goods, imported from Bloc countries, has become available in the North.)

¹The numbers represent live weight.

²G-28.

The less fortunate families are forced to supplement their inadequate rice rations with secondary crops and vegetables. Meat and fish are seldom available and substitutes, such as soybean curd, are used. Though not starving, they may complain that they feel hungry and want more rice and meat.

The range and the varying intensity of individual reactions to the standard of living in the North cannot be conveyed without quoting from the interviews: A regrouped prisoner states soberly:

Given that North Vietnam was poorer than South Vietnam, I thought life there was fairly good. People didn't have all they needed but life had really been improved. (AG441.)

The NVA prisoner, despite his approval of the government in the North, admits that:

On one or two points, I had some cause for concern: I wanted to buy a bicycle, but I couldn't do so because of the restriction. I also didn't like the limitations imposed on the purchase of radios. They were only available to cadres, for example, and I did not like that. I would have liked to own one. (AG469.)

A North Vietnamese prisoner, in a typical comment, states: "We had enough food to eat but not as much as we wanted to." (AG449.) A NVA prisoner, who "in broad terms" likes "everything about the government and its system in the North," protests too much in indicating that he is satisfied with the rations because he denies higher aspirations:

Every year, we each were entitled to buy four meters of cloth. To me, four meters is just right, and nobody could want more. In our area, each person was entitled to 500 grams of meat per month, and on special occasions, such as Tet, there was no rationing of meat. So you see, even meat was still available, and who would want more than that? As for sugar, we produced sugar in our area, and therefore had no problem getting it. (AG469. Our underlining.)

A Southern rallier, who had never seen the North, contrasts the promise of the Party to improve the standard of living with the reality in the North:

They were deprived of all material comforts...The working class...still had to put up with a hard life under a Communist regime. You didn't even have the right to kill your own cow for meat... When one of a man's parents died, he was allowed to buy only three meters of white cotton -- hardly enough to use for the funeral. All these were told me by close regroupee friends. I said to myself that if the liberated workers in the North had to live so miserably, then what was the use of the liberation? (K-20.)

POLARITY OF LICENSE AND REGIMENTATION

Although the demand for personal freedom is probably strong among the small number of Vietnamese who have received a Western education, it is probably weak in the countryside, which was little affected by Western concepts.¹

Traditional Sino-Vietnamese education did not seek a solution to social conflict either in defining, limiting, and guaranteeing the rights and interests of the individual or in the balance of power and interests between individuals. Instead, it strove to transform the child into a man in whom the interest and will of the group supersedes those of the individual.² The family and the hierarchic relations within it became a model for the adult's relationships to his superiors, peers, and subordinates within the community and the state. "If for the Western individual rights are fundamental and are protected and reinforced by the conception of justice, for the Confucian the benefits an

¹Occasionally we refer to traditional beliefs and sentiments that Vietnam to a large extent shared with China. We do not know how strong these traditions are today in modulating the farmers' beliefs, sentiments and behavior. (We know of only one recent empirical study of differences in behavior between Chinese and Westerners. Richard Solomon of the University of Michigan conducted interviews and psychological tests in Taiwan and came to the conclusion that the Chinese, in contrast to the Westerner, is more strongly "other directed" as long as he remains within his group, and is less strongly "inner directed" when isolated from his culture.) However, whenever these Sino-Vietnamese traditions are different in quality and degree of emphasis from those in the West, we mention them as hypotheses, if they seem to explain behavior or reactions described in Rand interviews.

²P. Huard and M. Durand, Connaissance du Viet-Nam, p. 99.

individual can claim are irrelevant. He knows only duties which everyone is under the peremptory obligation to fulfill correctly."¹

In Vietnam, as in China, the Party strives to emancipate the rural youths and women from the rule of the male, the old, and the family, and to transfer the individual's familial obligations to institutions such as the state or the Party.² The Party in the North denounced personal freedom as "liberty disease."³

When the traditional obligations weaken and are not replaced by new ones, as is happening under the GVN, both Northerners and Southerners may equate the new personal freedom with license. At the same time, above a certain level regimentation by the Party of the individual's private life is apt to be felt as onerous. A NVA prisoner, a sergeant, thus dislikes both the license of the South and the restrictions in the North:

I don't know exactly what political system would be the best for South Vietnam to develop, but I wish to see a government in which the people would not enjoy too much freedom, as in South Vietnam now, or not liable to so many constraints as in North Vietnam. I say the excesses on either side should be cut by fifty percent. People must be given a minimum of freedom in their spiritual, material and sentimental life.⁴

License in the South

According to a rallier specializing in anti-NLF propaganda in rural areas of the South,

They [GVN forces] quarrel and fight with each other after a gambling spree.... I used to think that we have democracy, but too much democracy is bad, too much freedom leads to irresponsibility.⁵

¹ Ibid., p. 100.

² C. K. Yang, The Chinese Family in the Communist Revolution, in Chinese Communist Society: The Family and the Village, pp. 172-173.

³ Hoang Van Chi, From Colonialism to Communism, p. 143.

⁴ Rand interview, K-25.

⁵ AG-231, Supplement A.

The mother of an NLF fighter, asked by a GVN official to persuade her son to rally, answers: "Why should I bring him back? So he can gamble? So he can fight with others? So others can beat him up?"¹

A NVA rallier, Party Member, and lieutenant recalls:

What I liked best in the North was the order. For example, in a meeting, all the participants -- children as well as grown-ups -- conducted themselves well, they were never noisy or unruly. I took part in a meeting in Saigon, and I found that attendants made too much noise. Sometimes, while a high official was talking, a person just walked out.²

Asked for a comparison between life in the North and in Saigon, a NVA rallier, who remembers life in the North as "very miserable," observes:

Concerning the habits and customs here, what amazes me is that a lot of people here often curse one another coarsely. I find this habit ridiculous because in the North the behavior of the people is more "civilized" from the viewpoint of cursing or using harsh words in hot discussions. Theft and robbery don't exist in the North, and anyone³ finding an object immediately restores it to the owner.

Regimentation in the North

Ralliers and prisoners from the North frequently complain that their private life was too regimented, and add -- though without indicating that the silence was a burden -- that they did not dare to complain about the restrictions the regime imposed upon them.

"In the North," explains a rallier, "the Government is in control of everything; you feel trapped."⁴

A NVA prisoner who wants to return to the North as soon as he is released mentions the advantages of life in a cooperative -- equality and security -- but adds "I personally felt that too many restrictions were imposed upon us, and moreover the work did not pay much. However,

¹ AG-231, Supplement A, p. 63.

² AG-480.

³ AG-78.

⁴ AG-454, Supplement.

I did not dare express my feelings." His hope for the future: "... having more food, being allowed more time to ourselves, and having less restrictions and demands imposed on us."¹

A NVA rallier classified as "upper middle" farmer dislikes the Northern "freedom":

Question: What did you like most about life in the North?

Answer: I liked nothing about life in the North. Of course, there was freedom in the North, but it was a different kind of freedom. Whatever one did there, he did within the framework, which had been organized. We weren't supposed to stray from the limits which had been set for us. I have always enjoyed living in freedom, but I couldn't swallow that type of freedom.

Question: In the North, could you discuss any of the things you disliked with other people or were you afraid to do so?

Answer: I didn't dare mention the things I disliked.²

Another NVA prisoner, a sergeant, who thinks that "the standard of living of the people in North Vietnam is not high enough," lists three attributes of a government that could find support among all Vietnamese:

I think that whatever regime or Government could secure a comfortable life and freedom for the people and win independence for our country would have the confidence and the support of the Vietnamese people.³

A rallier fuses, as one would expect, the discontent about penury with the dismay about regimentation:

Question: What did you most dislike about the government and its system in the North?

Answer: In a person's life, eating and clothing are the two most important matters. In the North, they are under strict restrictions. And this is the thing I dislike most of all about the North. There is nothing else I dislike as much.⁴

¹ AG-449.

² AG-612.

³ K-21.

⁴ AG-473, item 94.

More specifically,

Question: What did you dislike most about...life [in the North]?

Answer: ...one wasn't free to buy or eat anything at will. For anything one needed a ticket.... In case of sickness one had to show a physician's certificate to buy a can of milk or some sugar.¹

A NVA rallier states: "If I had money there was nowhere I could buy food with it," either because he did not have ration cards or the desired commodity was unavailable. Consequently, "What good was the money to me? It was worthless money."²

In the North, there is too little free time. "We worked in the morning until 11 A.M.," an informant reminisces, "stopped for lunch and began again at 1:30 P.M. The day's work was over at 5:30 P.M. In the evening there was a production cell meeting in which we went over our day's scores to see if we had any shortcomings."³ "When I was at home," confides another, "I only wished that we had land to work and that we didn't have to attend meetings so often. We worked hard during the day, and by the time we had finished work, we wanted to be able to rest instead of being forced to attend all those meetings which sometimes lasted up to midnight."⁴ "A Nationalist soldier," a rallier calculates, "has to go on operations too. But, when his mission is over, he is free to enjoy his time. He can go here and there as he pleases."⁵

Northerners complain of organizational meetings because they are felt to be a waste of time. Some farmers would like to be able to work more. The same rallier who envied the leisure time available to the "Nationalist soldier" complains that he was not permitted

¹ AG-466, item 5.

² AG-473.

³ AG-615, item 30.

⁴ AG-449, item 15.

⁵ AG-473, item 83.

to moonlight: Before joining the cooperative, "after we finished working on our land, we could work as hired laborers for others."¹

A Northerner indicates that there was rural under-employment:

However, we could not work as much as we liked, because our cell leader was responsible for the division of work and labor, and he had to insure that everyone had the chance to work but that nobody worked at the expense of others.²

An NVA rallier is aware that the government in the North, though it "still claims that the people in the North are free to move around," prevents travel by denying the applicant ration cards, without which the traveler cannot buy food in stores or restaurants. If one wanted to travel without permission to visit one's family, one would have to eat their rations: Consequently, "so many times I felt reluctant to make the visits; even family ties had to be broken." He concludes:

Of course, they [the people] are free to move around. They can go wherever they want to, but if they don't have authorization to do so, what good does their freedom do them. Of course, the people in the North are free to buy and sell. But what good does their freedom do to them if the government refuses to sell them its goods and food? It is the same as forbidding the people to have private enterprise.³

COMPENSATING ADVANTAGES OF LIFE UNDER COMMUNISM

Having to endure an austere standard of living and the regimentation of one's life is to some extent offset by advantages of life under Communism: The farmers, especially the poor ones, can rise to positions of leadership; the regime has greatly reduced inequality and has put an end to the fear of starving.

¹ AG-473.

² AG-469.

³ AG-473.

Social Mobility in the Countryside

The French as well as their successors selected the personnel for government and higher ranking army position from among the urban elite:

It was from the cities that the new officials were to be recruited. To qualify for high government positions, new diplomas were required, and these could be gained only through a long and expensive period of schooling obtainable only in the cities. The peasants were therefore excluded from the high, as well as from the middle, positions.

...the officer corps is composed mostly of high school graduates, that is, the urban and bourgeois section of the population. To send these officers out into the field is to ask them to undergo hardship, perhaps to die, for what, in their eyes, is not really in their interests. It was pointed out earlier that their interests lie in the cities and across the seas. They owe nothing to the villagers, so why should they be asked to die defending them? Further, they feel completely lost in a milieu and a life to which they have become foreign.¹

In striking contrast is the deliberate preference shown by North Vietnam and the NLF in choosing poor and middle farmers for positions of leadership in the civil administration and army. The communists generally exclude from responsible roles men who come from the more prosperous class of farmers and from the urban middle class. A talented Vietnamese peasant, as has often been observed, must be aware that his chances of getting an education and promotion are much better under a communist regime than in and under the GVN.

THE ENJOYMENT OF EQUALITY

To judge from the informants, many in the North feel about the reduced inequality in income as the regime wants them to feel:

Question: What did you like best about the government...in North Vietnam?

¹Ton That Tien, "Vietnam: A Case of Social Alienation," International Affairs, July 1967, Vol. 43, No. 3.

Answer: What I liked best...was that...food was equally distributed to people regardless of their financial status. In North Vietnam a wealthy man wasn't authorized to buy more food or clothes than the ration reserved for him....¹

In the both more general and more vivid words of another,

The goal of the government is...to make everybody live under the same economic conditions. There are no rich and poor in the North; everybody is the same. Before, there were people so rich that they lived in storied houses, drove cars and had their children dressed up nicely, but there were also people so poor that they had to beg for a living. In the North at the present time everybody is equal.²

The awareness of equality may, of course, reduce discontent:

Question: Did anyone complain about the rations?

Answer: ...nobody dared to complain, because we could all see that even the cadres received the same rations as the soldiers, so how could anyone say anything?³

An End to the Fear of Starving

Stressing that "a lot of people were only half fed," a rallier cannot help observing that if "the Government always reminded the people that the Party always saw to it that nobody starved,...that was very true."⁴ "The only advantage" of cooperatives, explains an informant who dislikes them, "were that each year, although the food was not plentiful, it was always available, and members never ran the risk of starving. If they were short of rice, they always had sweet potatoes or corn; we never had to go without food, no matter how bad the season was."⁵ "In case of a bad harvest," confirms another, "we had less to eat, but everybody had his share; none had to starve"⁶ -- also because the

¹AG-409, item 66.

²AG-406, item 141.

³AG-446, item 197.

⁴AG-478, item 67.

⁵AG-449, item 26.

⁶AG-469, item 34.

government moderates its demands with that end in view: "In the event of a bad season the taxes were cut down to a smaller percentage."¹ The cooperative, in its turn, provides a cushion for individual emergencies:

Question: What would happen if a man didn't have much property to contribute to the co-op, yet he was too sick to contribute his labor?

Answer: He might borrow money from the co-op to buy medicine and food. When he became well enough to work, the co-op would see to it that he had a job, so that at harvest time he would earn enough money to live on and to pay back his debt. He didn't have to pay any interest on the debt, and he might pay back gradually....²

Thus, while "in the old days the poor...lived in constant worry, and they never knew whether they would have anything to eat the next day, ...under the present regime the poor no longer have to worry...."³

Other Themes

The regime reminds the farmers that the standard of living is low because the North must develop industries and provide aid to the NLF in the South.

The compulsory delivery of rice to the state is necessary because the workers and soldiers have to be fed. The people were urged to work hard in order to help build an industrialized Socialist state, which would provide a higher standard of living in the future. The Party reminded them of the accomplishments of the first ten years: "One must honestly accept the fact that the economy of North Vietnam has developed a great deal and regularly, especially in handicraft and agriculture."⁴

A NVA prisoner is asked:

What policies has the Hanoi Government carried out in North Vietnam? Do these policies fulfill the aspirations of the people?

¹AG-469, item 24.

²AG-464, item 330.

³AG-464, item 332.

⁴AG-480, questions 28, 70, 71, and K-21, question 138.

He answers:

The standard of living of people in North Vietnam is not high enough....It is only because of the war that the well being of people is not yet secured. Without the war, the needs of people could be met easily with such economic development. People in North Vietnam must carry out an austerity program to support not only the war in South Vietnam, but two more, in Laos and in North Vietnam. For that reason, they cannot afford good food and nice clothes, nor have the same living conditions as people in some areas in South Vietnam.¹

¹K-21.

IV. THE SOUTHERN FARMERS' EXPECTATIONS
OF HIGHER INCOME

A population's support for its government is, among other factors, a function of its belief that victory over the enemy would preserve and improve, and defeat deprive them of, cherished aspects of "our way of life." The standard of living is an especially important component of the quality of life. GVN propaganda asserts that the material conditions of the rural population in South Vietnam will improve if the GVN wins over the NLF,¹ but it fails to show why a victory over communism would be to the massive economic advantage of the lower rural strata in the South.

It is likely that in rural areas ownership of land -- in contrast to various plans for development in agriculture -- appears to the population as the most easily understood instrument for raising income. Though under Diem land-reform legislation provided for redistribution of some riceland, the program benefited few, disappointed many who either did not benefit or were worse off after the reform than they were before, and left the pattern of land ownership essentially unchanged.

Diem's successors, except for occasional rhetorical statements, showed no interest in land reform. Though some U.S. Congressmen, the American press, and some members of USAID felt that there was a need for a more extensive distribution of land in Vietnam, U.S. policy-makers and their staffs in Washington and Saigon consistently opposed land reform.

In this section of the Memorandum, after describing the abortive Diem reforms, we examine the validity of a number of arguments used by American officials to justify their opposition to further land reform, and several economic programs offered by them as preferred alternatives

¹The Revolutionary Development cadres assert: "We must admit courageously that we would cause lots of troubles to the people's daily lives with the above measures and programs of ours. But, in general, they are supposed to undergo sacrifices in exchange for a prosperous future." Vung Tau material, p. 159.

to changes in the pattern of landownership. We note, in conclusion, some opportunities as well as risks that would arise, if the GVN were to carry out an extensive program of land distribution.

BACKGROUND

Land Reform Under Diem¹

In the 1950s Diem's land-reform laws limited individual riceland ownership to 100 hectares. All riceland in excess of this amount was purchased by the GVN, and was supposed to be resold to tenants. These GVN measures distributed 11 percent of the riceland -- almost all of the distributed land was located in the Delta -- to 5.4 percent of Vietnam's rural families.

Priority was given to farmers who had been tenants on the expropriated land; however, "the farmers who, profiting by recent events, have illegally occupied the land and who refused to sign lease contracts, or who refused to pay land rents and taxes during the past years, and who refused to pay these back rents by March 13, 1957," were not eligible to receive land.² Because the "recent events" referred to the French war against the Vietn Minh, some of the farmers who had received land from the Viet Minh, or had failed to pay rent and taxes during the war and the early years of the Diem regime, were displaced by new owners.³

The reaction in one village in Long An province was summed up by Hendry:

The criticism of the land reform came from the landless and tenants who still comprise the majority of the village population.... It reflected bitterness at being left out,

¹We restrict the meaning of "land reform" to the purchase by the government of land owned by large landowners and resale to landless and landpoor farmers. Laws regulating the relationship between landlord and tenant, in our usage, are not land reform, and will be discussed later.

²Ordinance 57, in Stanford Research Institute, Land Reform in Vietnam, Vol. II, p. C-25.

³D. W. P. Elliott interviewed, in Dinh Tuong province, a number of displaced farmers. We do not know how many farmers were deprived of land during the Diem reform.

together with a feeling that the land reform did nothing to help them, the poorest of the village householders.¹

A 1967 survey reveals a consensus among owners as well as tenants: 96 to 98 percent felt that, under a new land reform, land should be given, first of all, to laborers with no land; second, to tenants with little land; and, third, to landowners with little land.²

Few benefited from land distribution, because the GVN sold only 35 percent of the land it had acquired from Vietnamese and French landlords. The distribution of the remaining land practically ceased in the early 1960s. Furthermore, the 100-hectare limit was too high if we compare it with the standards set in land reform of other countries; legislation limited landholdings to 2.8 hectares in Japan and South Korea, and to 4 hectares in Taiwan.³

A 1964 survey of 2,910 resident households in 97 secure hamlets located in all areas of South Vietnam except the Central Highlands shows that despite the land reform, over 40 percent of the households owned no land and an additional 31 percent owned less than half a hectare, an area too small to sustain an average Vietnamese family.⁴ Another survey conducted in 1967 shows that the Diem reforms did not significantly reduce the concentration of land ownership.⁵

In summary, the land reform benefited a few, deprived some tenants of the land they tilled, and created bitterness among the majority of the poorer farmers who received nothing and saw that the GVN retained for itself most of the expropriated land.⁶

¹Hendry, The Small World of Khanh Hau, pp. 40, 42.

²SRI, Land Reform in Vietnam, Vol. V, pp. 104-105.

³In Japan, 3 hectares was the average limit on holdings of resident landowners on all islands except Hokkaido. Absentee landlords were not permitted to retain any land. Dore, Land Reform in Japan, p. 138.

⁴Stroup survey.

⁵SRI, Land Reform in Vietnam, Vol. V, pp. 138-140, shows the Lorenz curves for the distribution of ownership in 1955 and 1966.

⁶The GVN and province chiefs share the revenues from the expropriated but undistributed land that is rented and cultivated by farmers.

Unused Potential of a New Land Reform

Because the area of riceland is limited, an equalitarian distribution of all riceland in the Central Lowlands would result in individual plots too small to support a family. Introduction of commercial crops and related industries is necessary if the living standard in Central Vietnam is to rise.

However, in the rest of Vietnam, which we will call the Southern Region -- it comprises the area of II and IV Corps -- a more thorough land reform, similar to the reforms that took place in Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea, could convert the majority of the rural population into owners of adequate areas of riceland. We summarize here one of several proposals for such land reform, described in the SRI study.¹ The two sources of riceland for distribution to new owners consist of:

a. The undistributed land bought by the GVN from French and Vietnamese owners during the land reform of the 1950s, and the communal lands in the Southern Region.

b. An additional 576,000 hectares from 18,430 private owners, made available for purchase by the GVN if the present limit of 100 hectares on the area of riceland that a family can own were lowered to 10 hectares.² The cost of acquiring the land at current market prices would be approximately \$215 million.

Table 4 shows that if the 1.0 million additional hectares of riceland were distributed into 1.5-hectare plots, 704,000 families would become owners; a somewhat higher allotment of 2 hectares per family could be distributed among 528,000 families.³ The numbers of families benefiting under the versions of the proposed land reform correspond to 4.7 million and 3.5 million people, respectively.

¹SRI, Land Reform in Vietnam, Vol. V, pp. 138-167.

²That is, landlords who own more than 10 hectares can retain only 10 hectares and are obliged to sell the rest to the government.

³One hectare of riceland in the Southern Region will provide the minimum number of calories necessary for subsistence of an average family, consisting of 6.66 persons.

Table 4

AN EXAMPLE OF A NEW LAND-REFORM PROPOSAL
FOR THE SOUTHERN REGION^a
(All areas in hectares)

Area per Family of New Owners	Number of New Owners		Number of Landlords Forced To Sell	Land Bought from Landlords		Undistributed GVN and Communal Land	
	Families	People		Area	Cost	Area	Cost
1.5	704,000	4,687,000	18,430	576,000	\$215 million	479,000	0
2.0	528,000	3,516,000					

^a A landowner can retain 10 hectares of riceland; he must sell the rest to the GVN.

The total rural population in the Southern Region amounts to about 6 million people.

Additional land could be made available for distribution if the upper limit on individual original holdings were further reduced from 10 to 4 or 5 hectares. This amount represents the maximum size of a farm which a single family -- according to a vast majority of interviewed farmers¹ -- can operate without outside help.

An equalitarian distribution of riceland remains an unused potential for quickly and substantially raising the income of all the poor and middle peasants living in the major rice-producing areas of South Vietnam. If a tenant on one hectare of riceland becomes its owner, free of charge, the rice crop at his disposal -- after deducting the cost of fertilizer, interest payment on a loan, taxes, and rent -- increases by approximately 50, 75, and 150 percent, depending on whether the rent charged by the landlord is 15, 25, or 50 percent of the crop.²

¹ SRI, Land Reform in Vietnam, Vol. V, p. 156.

² We have assumed that the farmer and his family can provide all of the required labor, and have used the cost estimates of rice production in Long An province, summarized by Hendry, The Small World of Khanh Hau, pp. 82-83. The ceiling on rent was 25 percent of the crop; Hendry, writing in 1959 (p. 84), states that "there is some reason to believe

AMERICAN OPPOSITION TO LAND REFORM

Diem's successors showed no interest in land reform beyond occasional rhetorical statements. Though some U.S. Congressmen, Ambassador Lodge, the American press, and some members of USAID believed that there was a need for more extensive distribution of land in Vietnam, U.S. policymakers and their staffs in Washington and Saigon consistently opposed land reform. The attack was two-pronged: They cited arguments against land reform, and at the same time proposed a number of economic programs as preferred alternatives to land reform.

Arguments Against Land Reform

Landlord Opposition

American opposition to land reform is in part based on the belief that if a new reform were undertaken, the large landowners would oppose it and their "allegiance" to the GVN would decline.¹

Indeed, 90 percent of the landlords interviewed stated that they would not be willing to sell their land at current market prices.² However, only 22 percent were inflexible in their determination to oppose a new land reform. The rest "would either welcome such a program or not oppose it if it were fair and equitable."³ It appears that the opposition of many owners is related to their dissatisfaction with compensation provided by Diem's reform laws: the price paid by the GVN was two-thirds of the market price, and only 10 percent was paid in cash, the rest being paid in government bonds. Furthermore,

that the actual rents...are higher than the official rent ceilings." The rent was often 50 percent of the yield under French rule. The ranges shown below correspond to a range in the cost of loans.

<u>Rent</u>	<u>Ownership increases profit by:</u>
25 percent	39 to 46 percent
35 percent	68 to 81 percent
50 percent	142 to 185 percent

¹The argument is paraphrased in the SRI study, Vol. I, p. 61.

²Ibid., p. 61.

³Ibid., p. 66. Emphasis added.

there were insufficient opportunities in government-owned enterprises to permit conversion of bonds into stocks. At the present time, the compensation would have to be insured against further inflation. The landlords also remember that most of the land they were forced to sell to the government in the 1950s was never resold to the landless farmers. We do not wish to minimize landlord opposition to further land reform, but it is apparent that if the terms of compensation assured the landlords that their income would not decline, the majority would not actively oppose a new land reform.

Cost of Land Reform

Two difficulties may be raised in connection with proposals for a new land-reform program. First, because it is likely that the United States would have to pay for it, we must examine the opportunity costs. Second, some of the compensation to landowners will be in the form of cash and, consequently, may contribute to the inflationary trend in Vietnam.

The first difficulty can be turned around to ask whether the non-military components of the present "pacification" programs ought not to be replaced by a program of land reform. Under "Land Is not an Issue," below, we show some evidence that the rural population values land reform more highly than the economic and political benefits of "pacification."¹

Table 5 shows American expenditures on non-military "pacification" programs. Direct U.S. expenditures in support of these activities represent only a portion of the total investment in pacification, because we must also consider the large costs connected with the creation of infrastructure and with the services that support pacification but appear in other budgets. For example, the annual salary

¹The economic and political programs are intended to convince the rural population that it would have a better life under the GVN than under a communist government. The programs would have a better chance of meeting the stated objective if they included land reform, which in the countryside is valued higher than any other form of economic or political assistance.

Table 5

U.S. EXPENDITURES ON NON-MILITARY
"PACIFICATION" PROGRAMS

	<u>1965-1968</u>	<u>1967</u>	<u>1968</u>	<u>1967-1968</u>
Millions of dollars	447	138	166	304
Billions of piasters	18.0	5.0	6.0	11.0

The table is based on estimates made in May 1967. The figures represent the personnel costs of Revolutionary Development cadres, the cost of their non-military activities in the villages, and 55 percent of U.S. inputs to GVN Ministry programs in support of "pacification." They do not include the costs of Vietnamese military forces assigned to the "pacification" mission, or of the Chieu Hoi, refugee, and psyop programs.

Note that some of the RD cadres perform military and police functions as well as civil ones. For example, the census grievance cadres, hoping to change the attitudes of the rural population toward the government, aspire to be "a channel of [the people's] grievances and aspirations to higher authorities"; on the other hand, they collect intelligence information.

costs for GVN civilian personnel working on pacification are estimated to be about 14 billion piasters.¹

The most ambitious SRI program would require \$215 million for the purchase of 580,000 hectares of riceland. If 20 percent of the current market price of the land is paid to the landowners in cash, 5 billion piasters would be added, perhaps over a period of one to two years, to U.S. expenditures in Vietnam. To these estimates must be added the costs of administering the program.²

Table 5 shows that if in 1965 we had decided to forgo the non-military "pacification" programs, consisting of the Revolutionary Development cadres and the economic and political activities listed below,³ between 1965 and 1968 we could have paid in full all the costs of a land-reform program. Furthermore, the table shows that if we substitute land reform for other current civil programs, the 20 percent compensation in piasters is equivalent to the yearly piaster expenditures of present programs.

Mitchell on Inequality and Insurgency⁴

In 1967 E. J. Mitchell published a Rand study comprising a statistical analysis and a discussion of a number of conjectured relationships between a farmer's propensity to rebel against his government, on the one hand, and his economic well-being and various measures of inequality, on the other.⁵ In these pages we will

¹There are additional reasons for believing that the table underestimates both dollar and piaster expenditures. It is likely that the actual expenditures from 1967 through 1969 exceed the estimates -- made in May 1967 -- shown in Table 5.

²AID has requested funds for land reform. It plans to spend \$10 million in FY 1969 and is requesting \$30 million for FY 1970.

³Under "Land Is not an Issue."

⁴We present here, in highly condensed form, a number of criticisms leveled at Mitchell's study by Rand staff members (H. Averch, C. Cooper, F. Denton, D. Ellsberg, J. J. McCall, A. Russo, T. P. Schultz).

⁵RM-5181-ARPA (Abridged), Land Tenure and Rebellion: A Statistical Analysis of Factors Affecting Government Control in South Vietnam, June 1967; see also Mitchell's article "Inequality and Insurgency: A Statistical Study of South Vietnam," World Politics, April 1968.

discuss primarily the statistical work and the inferences one can draw from it.

Mitchell's Results. The degree of security or government control within South Vietnam varies considerably from province to province. Mitchell poses the question, "How do we account for this variation in control? Why does one province have more secure hamlets than another? To answer these questions we need some kind of model or framework upon which to base a statistical analysis."¹

The core of the paper is an investigation of the statistical association between, on the one hand, GVN control in 26 provinces of South Vietnam, as measured by the percentage of hamlets in a province judged to be "secure" in 1964 and 1965, and, on the other, six variables: a measure of inequality in the distribution by size of landholdings -- that is, the riceland owned or rented by the farm operator; the percentage of riceland in a province cultivated by owners; a measure of the percentage of riceland in a province bought by the government and distributed to farmers during the Diem land reform; a measure of the percentage of riceland bought by the GVN but not distributed; a measure of cross-country mobility; and population density.

When a linear multiple regression equation containing these six variables is fitted to province control data, the relationship between control and each of the six variables turns out to be, Mitchell reports, statistically significant.² The proportion of the total adjusted variance among control data for the 26 provinces "explained" by the six variables of the regression model is substantial ($\bar{R}^2 = 0.66$).³

¹World Politics, p. 423.

²A variable is called statistically significant if its coefficient has a t-statistic of 2.1 or larger.

³ R^2 is the coefficient of determination or an estimate of the proportion of the total variance of control "explained" by the independent variables. (\bar{R}^2 indicates that the coefficient has been adjusted for degrees of freedom.) R^2 can vary from 0 to 1.0. For each observed value of control we have a corresponding value calculated by means of the regression model; if for each province the two values of control are identical, $R^2 = 1$ and we say that all of the variance in control is "explained" by the independent variables.

The statistical association reported by Mitchell can be summarized as follows: In 1964 and 1965, observed government control tended to be higher in these provinces in which the inequality in landholdings was high, the percentage of owner-operated land was small, the area of land bought by the GVN and distributed during the Diem land reform was small, and the area bought by the GVN but not distributed was high.

Mitchell concludes that if the third and fourth variables used in the regression adequately measure the percentage of riceland bought and distributed and the riceland bought and undistributed, respectively, "then it is possible that redistribution [of riceland] has had a negative impact on control. At least, the view that redistribution has had a positive effect is sharply contradicted."¹ Note that words such as "impact" and "effect" have carried Mitchell from a statement about statistical association to an inference about a dynamic, causal relation between land reform and consequent changes in government control.

Mitchell and the Land-reform Controversy. Both opponents and proponents of land reform uncritically assumed that these statistical results have policy implications for a future land reform in Vietnam. The opponents have cited Mitchell's work as a warning that land reform may decrease future government control.²

In a 1968 report, the Committee on Government Operations urged the U.S. government to implement promptly an effective land-reform program in Vietnam.³ One dissenting member of the Committee argued against land reform, in part, because "the efficiency of large tracts and the greater security which they afford in time of war, according to The Rand Corporation study for the Defense Department, have been offered as reasons why fragmentation might be questioned."⁴ In fact,

¹World Politics, p. 432.

²A number of observers have reported that this argument was used in Washington and Saigon. See, also, R. Critchfield's report in the Washington Sunday Star, March 16, 1969.

³Land Reform in Vietnam, Twentieth Report by the Committee on Government Operations, U.S. House of Representatives, March 5, 1968.

⁴Ibid., p. 19.

Representative J. E. Moss, and Representative O. R. Reid seem to have accepted Mitchell's study as an irrefutable argument against land reform and consequently, were forced to reject the purported Rand recommendations as immoral:

The principal thesis of the Rand study [Mitchell's RM-5181-ARPA (Abridged)] was this: "From the point of view of Government control, the ideal province in South Vietnam would be one in which few peasants operate their own land, the distribution of landholdings is unequal, no land redistribution has taken place...." We strongly believe it is morally wrong to deliberately keep the people of any nation weak and dependent in order to control them -- whatever the end. Such a Machiavellian policy, if adopted, could only serve as a device to delay and dilute necessary reforms. If our aim is to build the foundations for a free society in South Vietnam, we cannot do it by keeping the peasants in economic serfdom....¹

Re-examination of Mitchell's Model. In the spring of 1969, T. Paul Schultz recomputed the regression model and reported the results in an internal Rand document.² We present below a number of Schultz' findings.

1. When Mitchell's regression model was recalculated using his published data, only four of the six variables were found to be statistically significant: the population density and the measure of cross-country mobility are no longer significantly associated with control.³ The proportion of total variance "explained" by the regression turned out to be 17 percent lower than that reported by Mitchell.⁴

¹Ibid., p. 22. The references to the Rand Corporation study may suggest that Mitchell's work is interpreted as a Rand "position paper" or represents a consensus among the Rand staff. The criticism presented in these pages should make clear that at Rand most of those who specialize in the study of Vietnam and in the application of statistical methods to problems in economics and political science disagree with Mitchell.

²Schultz intends to report his findings in a Rand Memorandum.

³At the 5 percent confidence level, for which the regression coefficient must be at least 1.7 times its standard error.

⁴ R^2 decreases from 0.66 to 0.55.

2. In 1967 Mitchell did not have the two sets of data on the areas of riceland in each province bought and distributed, and bought but undistributed, respectively, by the GVN under the Diem reform laws. He did have data for each province giving the areas of riceland bought by the GVN from Vietnamese and French landlords, respectively; because he knew that at least half of the former and little or none of the latter had been distributed, he used these two sets of data as proxies or approximate measures of the areas of riceland actually distributed and undistributed, respectively. We distinguish then between the two actual land-reform variables -- based on data published by the Stanford Research Institute in 1968 -- and the two proxies for land-reform variables, used by Mitchell.

When Mitchell's two land-reform proxies are replaced by the actual land-reform variables, and the remaining data published by Mitchell are used to calculate his regression model, the results are markedly different from those he reported. Schultz explains: "Both actual land reform variables are not significantly associated with government control, nor are owner-occupied land, population density, or mobility variables. The only variable that remains associated with control in either 1964 or 1965 is the inequality of land holdings...." The proportion of total adjusted variance "explained" by the multiple regression proposed by Mitchell is more than 60 percent lower than the porportion published by Mitchell.¹

3. Mitchell calculated his regression model using government control data for December 1964 and for 1965. If the model aspires to any degree of generality, it ought to exhibit the statistical association for control data from other years. In particular, Mitchell suggests that the model should have a greater "explanatory" power for the early 1960s, before American troops were introduced in large numbers. In Table 6 we show the percentage of total variance "explained" by the model and the six original variables -- including

¹The three estimates of the regression model are shown at the end of the report in Appendix F. R^2 declines from 0.66 to 0.24.

Table 6
MITCHELL'S MODEL FITTED TO CONTROL DATA
FOR VARIOUS YEARS

Control Data for	GVN control of	Percent of Variance Explained (R^2) ^a
7/1962	Villages	0.05
12/1962	Villages	.34
7/1963	Villages	.16
9/1963	Villages	.24
12/1963	Villages	.18
10/1963	Hamlets	.52
5/1964	Hamlets	.42
12/1964 Mitchell (RM-5181-ARPA)	Hamlets	.66
1965 Mitchell (RM-5181-ARPA Abridged)	Villages	.66
1/1967 HES ^b	Hamlets	.64
3/1967	Hamlets	.76
1/1968	Hamlets	.46
1/1968 HES ^b	Hamlets	.60
6/1968	Hamlets	.47
6/1968 HES ^b	Hamlets	.51
1/1969 HES ^b	Hamlets	0.70

Notes:

^a R^2 , in contrast to \bar{R}^2 , has not been adjusted for the number of degrees of freedom.

^bHamlet Evaluation System: relatively secure hamlets in categories A, B, and C.

Mitchell's proxies for land reform -- for control data ranging from 1962 through 1969.

The table shows that the model performs erratically, and especially poorly, in the early period.¹ The only independent variable associated with control to a significant degree, for most of the dates from 1962 through 1969, is the measure of inequality of landholdings.

4. Though Mitchell reported that, of the unspecified number of the variables he had examined, only six were significantly associated with control, a number of other variables -- average rural income and percentage of Hoa Hao population, for example -- have been shown to be strongly associated with control.² The inclusion of these new variables in Mitchell's multiple regression model reduces further the importance of most of his original "explanatory" variables.

In summary, Schultz' recalculations result in a collapse of most of the statistical associations originally reported by Mitchell. In particular, there is no association between (a) control and (b) either the percentage of land cultivated by owners or the land-reform variables. Inequality in landholdings remains significant, but explains very little of the observed variation of government control from province to province.

Implications. Mitchell's study would be useful to a policymaker who must decide whether to oppose or to recommend a program of land reform in Vietnam, if it could be used to predict the consequences of his actions. For example, can we use Mitchell's results to answer the question: If by 1970 we double the percentage of land cultivated

¹Mitchell believes that control data for December 1964 were the first relatively reliable estimates of security. However, the Department of Defense has questioned the reliability of the 1964-1965 control data. Control data for the years prior to 1967 are poor, but we know of no criterion indicating that, for example, the 1964 data are markedly more reliable than control data for 1962 and 1963.

²These variables were first suggested and tried in a regression model by A. Russo.

by owners in Dinh Tuong, will GVN control in this province decline by 25 percent?¹ Or can we at least conclude that control would decline? What direct inferences of interest to the decisionmaker can be drawn from the statement that for a 1964 sample of 26 provinces there is a statistical association between control and a number of provincial variables?

Mitchell's results might become relevant to decisions on land reform, if we could successfully face up to two problem areas: First, it is important to ask whether the relation observed in the sample holds (a) in other areas in Vietnam, (b) at different levels of aggregation -- that is, for district data as well as provincial data -- and, what is more important, (c) at times other than 1964. Second, it is important to keep in mind the often repeated, and equally often ignored, truism that correlation or statistical association does not provide us with a complete causal model; if we interpret the former relation as if it were the latter, our predictions may be biased and, in extreme cases, entirely wrong.

We list below a number of questions that a decisionmaker might want to answer, and explain why Mitchell's statistical association cannot be used to answer any of them.

1. Sample vs. population. Mitchell's regression model is based on data for 26 out of a total of 43 provinces. Can the model predict equally well the degree of government control, in 1964, in the remaining 17 provinces? Standard statistical techniques could be used to answer this question if the 26 provinces were picked at random. However, they were selected because they are the major rice-producing regions -- intentionally, none of the highland provinces were included -- and consequently statistical techniques are not applicable.

2. Lower levels of aggregation. If the 1964 data at a lower level of aggregation -- district, village, and hamlet -- were used in the regression model, would one expect to observe a relationship

¹Figure 1, p. 16, RM-5181-ARPA (Abridged).

similar to the one holding at provincial level? This question too cannot be answered. Only under very special conditions can we conclude that relations observed at the aggregate level will hold at a lower level of aggregation.¹

3. Control in other years. Does the model predict control for years other than 1964? We have reported that the relationship varies significantly from year to year.

4. Predicting alternative pasts. Does the model imply that if there had been no land reform under Diem, 1964 control would have been higher? If Diem's land reform had been markedly more thorough, would 1964 control have been lower?

5. Predicting alternative futures. If a new land reform were initiated this year, would control decline? If a negative land reform were initiated this year, would control rise?

In the last three sets of questions, we ask whether, in general, cross-sectional or static relations (that is, the association noted by Mitchell at one point in time, 1964) can be used to infer relations between variables over time (that is, a dynamic relationship). However, such inferences are not necessarily valid ones.² For example, "inasmuch as Negroes are below whites in educational attainment, one would assume that when Negroes replace white residents in an urban neighborhood, the neighborhood's average educational level will fall. But this need not occur if the incoming population is younger than the one displaced, because educational levels for both races have been rising over time."³

The model discussed by Mitchell and Schultz exhibits a statistical association but does not necessarily tell us about all the important

¹The ecological fallacy. See W. S. Robinson, "Ecological Correlation and Individual Behavior," American Sociological Journal, XVIII:6 (December 1953), and H. R. Alker, Mathematics and Politics, pp. 102-103.

²The cross-sectional fallacy. See Alker, op. cit., pp. 104-105.

³O. D. Duncan et al., Statistical Geography, pp. 160-161.

causes and their interactions. In fact, in an extreme case, an observed statistical association between two variables may turn out to be a spurious one, if an unobserved variable is the cause of the joint changes in the two observed ones. For example, suppose we discover a positive correlation between the number of fire engines dispatched to a fire and the amount of damage resulting from that fire. If we ignore the real world, we are tempted to conclude: to decrease the damage resulting from fire, we ought to dispatch fewer fire engines! Of course, our hypothetical regression ignores the real cause: the intensity and extent of the fire determine both the number of fire engines dispatched and the extent of damage. The association between number of trucks and damage is a spurious one.¹

Aside from the extreme case of spurious association, the more frequent problem is that of incompletely specifying the causal model. If one omits from the regression analysis an important factor determining control, our estimates of the relations among those variables included and control are biased.² Because of these problems inherent in regression analysis a widely used textbook on statistics skeptically concludes:

The application of multiple-regression techniques to observational data can be...treacherous and misleading.... In most circumstances, therefore, any indications produced by a multiple-regression analysis of observational data are merely a good hint to try for confirmation by a proper experiment.... The justification sometimes advanced that a multiple-regression analysis on observational data can be relied upon if there is an adequate theoretical background is utterly specious and disregards the unlimited capability of the human intellect for producing plausible explanations by the carload lot.³

¹Alker, pp. 113-114. In Chapter 6 Alker examines the kind of evidence that is necessary for inferring causation -- as defined by Lazarfeld and Simon -- from correlation.

²If the omitted variable is correlated with some of the included independent variables.

³Brownlee, Statistical Theory and Methodology in Science and Engineering, pp. 490-491.

Conclusion. A majority of economists and political scientists at Rand who have carefully studied Mitchell's work believe that it cannot and should not be used to answer the five questions formulated above, because a static model consisting of a single linear equation, relating 2 to 7 variables, cannot, they feel, represent the complex political, social and military interactions that influence control in Vietnam.¹

Schultz' proposal for further research in this area points to the three main deficiencies of Mitchell's model. First, a model of control should contain at least three simultaneous equations in which GVN and NLF allocations of effort, as well as control, are endogenously determined. Second, the model should be dynamic, predicting changes in control over time, if we want to draw policy implications. Third, because of the poverty of knowledge of the complex processes underlying control in the diverse regions of Vietnam, and hence the vulnerability of our model's characterization of the dynamics of an insurgency, statistical analysis should be conducted at the least aggregate level possible -- for example, the village or hamlet.²

With one qualification, we agree with Mitchell's disclaimer, which appears once in the preface: "Greater inequality [in landholdings is associated in 1964 and 1965 with]³ greater control. This does not mean, however, that a policy of increasing inequality would increase

¹The eight economists and political scientists were asked the following question: Do you believe that Mitchell's findings do, or should, influence your or the decisionmaker's posterior estimates of the probability that greater equality in the distribution of landholdings would decrease GVN control? Of the eight, seven answered that Mitchell's findings should not influence the posterior estimates. The eight do not include Mitchell or the two authors of the present report.

²A review of Mitchell's work leads Schultz to these conclusions. We cannot, in these pages, go into more detail of the suggested model.

³We have substituted the phrase, "is associated...with" for Mitchell's word "implies," because the latter may mean either to hint at or to infer; both allegations, we have tried to show, are unwarranted.

control, or that a policy of reducing inequality would reduce control."¹ When the subject, land reform, is highly controversial and the technical competence of the potential readers limited, this warning is especially important and should have received repeated emphasis in Mitchell's papers.

"Land Is not an Issue"

American opponents of land reform often assert that "land is not an issue in Vietnam." Further interrogation reveals that behind this ambiguous assertion can be distinguished a number of U.S. images of the motivations and attitudes of the Vietnamese farmer. We describe below three of the behavioral models: (a) The Vietnamese farmer is inflexibly bound by tradition, and prefers to live as his forefathers did. (b) He is a flexible profit-maximizer who, if given the opportunity to choose between, on the one hand, ownership of land and, on the other, tenancy and a number of government-sponsored projects designed to increase agricultural productivity, will select the latter. (c) He may prefer to become the owner of the land he tills but, if there is no land reform, the intensity of his disappointment will remain low, and, consequently, will not significantly affect his behavior toward the GVN and the NLF, either during the present war or when hostilities are over and he finds himself in a voting booth.

We shall examine whether these beliefs of the American opponents of land reform are at least consistent with data provided by surveys of attitudes of the Vietnamese farmers. Two such surveys, the first conducted in 1964 by Stroup and the second in 1967 by SRI, provide us with some insight into the preferences of the rural population.² But when we interpret the results of the two surveys, we must keep in mind

¹ Mitchell, Land Tenure and Rebellion, p. iii. However, in the next two sentences Mitchell seems to open a loophole: "Since these results were derived from an essentially static model, one must be cautious in drawing dynamic inferences. The final outcome of a program of land reform could not be determined from this study alone." What precisely is the instrumental meaning of the injunction, "one must be cautious"?

² Published in 1965 and 1968, respectively. The results were undoubtedly communicated to American officials before publication.

a few cautionary words. Both surveys were restricted to the population living in secure areas; partly because of this the samples are not necessarily representative of the rural population.¹ The questions are not always stated with sufficient precision to preclude misinterpretation by the respondents. Also, a farmer confronted with hypothetical choices may express preferences that do not necessarily correspond to his behavior when he faces real alternatives. But short of conducting a controlled experiment -- a sample of farmers could be offered real alternatives -- surveys of attitudes provide us with the only basis for predicting farmers' choices.

The Tradition-bound Farmer. The Vietnamese tenant, it is alleged, prefers the role of a tenant to that of an owner. An advocate of land reform, R. L. Sansom, describes a conversation with Joseph Alsop, which took place at a private dinner held at the residence of Ambassador Lodge. Alsop said, "the corvee has always been employed in Asia, and high rents have always been collected. The peasants expect it." Sansom concludes, "Alsop did not believe that land reform or the corvee was a major rural issue."²

Mitchell believes that in areas of unequal distribution, there exists "a conservative peasantry which has thoroughly rationalized the inevitability of the existing situation," and that poor peasants exhibit "docility and low aspirations."³

Similarly, other opponents of laws providing for the redistribution of land have argued that the tenant does not really want to own land, alleging that the typical farmer is a descendant of the "Yamato race"

¹According to R. L. Sanson, the SRI interviews were conducted in 54 hamlets, all of marked security. Only 94 of the 554 interviews were conducted in the densely populated areas of the Delta, where the proportion of farmers owning land is lowest.

²Robert L. Sanson, "The Impact of an Insurgent War on the Traditional Economy of the Mekong River Delta Region of South Vietnam," a thesis submitted to Oxford University, (n.d.) pp. 377-378. The encounter took place in April 1967.

³World Politics, pp. 437 and 423.

would say: "Here we are, now, able to devote our best efforts to increasing food production. And why? For the very reason that we are not landowners. It is because we are free [of the burden of land-ownership] and able to give ourselves over wholly to tilling the soil. That is all we want." This was said in 1946 by a Japanese opponent of land reform.¹

The SRI study asked tenants and tenant-owners whether they would prefer to buy their currently rented property at its market price, paying for it in 12 annual instalments, or to rent the land with full security of tenure. Eighty percent of the tenants preferred to buy, 10 percent preferred to continue renting, and 10 percent were undecided because they did not know the current market price of the land.²

Tenants, owner-tenants, and farm laborers were also asked whether they preferred to buy land, paying (in 12 annual instalments) 100 percent or 50 percent, respectively, of current market price, or to remain tenants. Table 7 shows the results:³

Table 7

PERCENTAGE OF FARMERS PREFERRING TO BUY LAND IN 12 ANNUAL
INSTALMENTS, RATHER THAN REMAIN TENANTS

Percentage of Farmers Preferring to Buy Land			At indicated percentage of Market Price
Tenants	Tenants- owners	Farm Workers	
78	79	76	100
87	85	83	50

¹Quoted by Dore, Land Reform in Japan, pp. 145-146.

²SRI, Land Reform in Vietnam, Vol. V, p. 95.

³Ibid.

These results demonstrate that the first model may describe the behavior of at most 17 percent of the Vietnamese farmers.

The Profit-maximizing Farmer. Other opponents of land reform allege that the Vietnamese farmer considers "landownership as relatively unimportant" and is more interested in the enforcement of laws imposing ceilings on the tenants' payments to the landlords and long-term leases, and in central or village government services. These services provide credit; subsidized farm inputs, such as agricultural tools, better seeds, insecticides, fertilizers, and livestock; public works, covering the construction of schools, roads, bridges, wells, latrines, markets, and irrigation works; instructions in improved methods in agricultural production; and facilities for more efficient distribution of farm outputs.¹

Implicit in these views of opponents of land reform is the belief that the Vietnamese farmer, when confronted by alternatives of equal cost, prefers certain options because he expects that they would increase his income more than would ownership of land.

Below, we shall indicate which alternative is more likely, in the short run, to raise the income of those Vietnamese farmers who own little or no ricaland. But first we shall examine some evidence of preferred alternatives in the Vietnamese countryside.

The survey conducted by Stroup in 1964 asked each Vietnamese farmer how much of the hypothetical increments in annual income he would allocate to various intended expenditures.² Table 8 shows the percentage of first choices for various expenditures, if the incremental income is 10,000 piastars, which is barely enough to buy half a hectare of land in Long An province,³ and alternatively "a lot of money."

¹ Land Reform in Vietnam, p. 169.

² See USAID, Annual Statistical Bulletin, p. 15, and the two references by Stroup.

³ At 1958 prices; there was little inflation between 1958 and 1964. Hendry, The Small World of Khanh Hau, p. 48.

Table 8

INTENDED EXPENDITURES IF INCOME IS INCREASED BY 10,000 PIASTERS
OR "A LOT OF MONEY": PERCENTAGE OF FIRST CHOICES
(1964 Stroup survey of 2,910 rural households)

Option	Percentage of first choices ^a if incremental income is:	
	10,000 piasters ^b	"a lot of money"
1. Buy farm land	23	42
2. Housing ^c		
a. Improve house and land	18	5
b. Buy or build a house	--	23
3. Other investment in agriculture		
a. Buy farm animals	13	7
b. Buy farming implements	3	5
4. Go into business ^d	--	7
5. Buy consumer goods, save, and pay off debts	43	11

Notes:

^aThe first choices in the two columns have different meanings. The respondents were asked to indicate how much of the 10,000 piasters they would spend on 10 items; if the farmer allocated more of the incremental money to one item than to others, it was designated as the first choice.

The farmer was shown a list of 15 options and asked to indicate which four items, in order of their importance, he would buy if he had "a lot of money."

^b10,000 piasters at 1964 prices represents approximately 50 percent of the average income of rural households, and is barely enough to buy half a hectare of land in Long An province.

^cWhen the farmer was asked how he would spend 10,000 piasters, the list of items did not contain the option of buying or building a house. It is likely that many farmers intending to buy or build a house picked the only available item under (2a).

^dItem 4 was not included in the list of choices for an incremental income of 10,000 piasters.

As the hypothetical increment in income increases from 10,000 piasters to "a lot of money," there is a shift away from consumption and saving and "other investment in agriculture" to an increasing demand for land and better housing. Note that the percentage of first choices indicating intended purchase of land rises from 23 to 44 percent. More than three times as many first choices go to buying land as to other investment in agriculture. Only 7 percent of the first choices indicate a desire to go into business.

The SRI survey, conducted in 1967, confirms Stroup's findings. Tenants and owner-tenants were asked to assign priorities among three types of assistance: long-term credit for purchases of land; credit for purchase of farm implements, fertilizer, better seeds, and the like; and technical assistance, consisting of instructions in improved methods of cultivation. Table 9 shows that 60 to 70 percent of the farmers preferred buying land to the other two choices.

Hamlet residents were asked whether they preferred a city job or ownership of riceland. Table 10 shows that more than 86 percent of farmers and farm workers preferred to own land. Even among hamlet residents who did not work at farming, a large percentage preferred to own land.¹

Hamlet residents were also asked: "What are the most serious problems in your village that have to be solved to make it a better place to live in for you and your family?" This was an open-ended question and no suggestions were given to the respondents; the farmers were free to mention anything that seemed to be a "most serious problem." The interviewers expected that this question would elicit

¹R. L. Sansom, who has studied agriculture in a number of Delta villages, comments in a memo dated November 15, 1968, on the reluctance of the rural population to seek jobs in cities:

I found the same preference, but few would believe it. Most students schooled in Economic Development 101 have a South American view of the peasant's preference for the bright lights of the city. In land-poor Asia such is not the case. The reason is very rational (as opposed to an "oriental mind" explanation): the society's wealth has been and is in its land. This finding, of course, makes the land reform issue all the more crucial.

Table 9

CREDIT TO BUY LAND, CREDIT TO BUY FARM INPUTS,
OR INSTRUCTIONS ON FARMING: PERCENTAGE OF FIRST CHOICES

Type of Assistance	Tenants	Owner-tenants
Buy land on credit	71%	60%
Buy farm machinery, etc. on credit	20	30
Instructions on farming	9	10

Source:

SRI, Land Reform in Vietnam, Vol. V, p. 98.

Table 10

CITY JOB OR OWNERSHIP OF LAND: PERCENTAGE OF FIRST CHOICES

Choice	Owners	Owner-tenants	Tenants	Farm Workers	Non-farmers
Prefer to own land	86%	100%	97%	87%	44%
Prefer a job in the city	14	0	3	13	56

Source:

SRI, Land Reform in Vietnam, Vol. V, p. 98.

farmers' views on what village government should do to improve life in the countryside.¹

Table 11 shows that irrespective of the farmer's status, there is little interest in public works and in the improvement of village government. The most serious problems are the need for land, credit, and agricultural inputs. Perhaps because the interviews were conducted in the relatively secure hamlets, the need for security and peace is not mentioned often.

There is some ambiguity in interpreting the farmers' need for credit, because there is no indication how it would be used. Using Table 8, one may conjecture that if the credit is large, most of the farmers would use the money to buy land, to buy or build a house, or to make some other investment in agriculture. Table 9 indicates that if the tenants and owner-tenants are asked to choose between buying land and agricultural inputs, 78 and 67 percent, respectively, would use the credit to buy land.

Table 11 shows that the need for land is the most serious problem of the tenants and farm worker. If our interpretation in the preceding paragraph is correct and if the need for credit were replaced by goods the farmer would buy with it, the need for land would become much more prominent in Table 11.

Paradoxically, Table 11 also suggests that the priorities assigned by Vietnamese farmers are diametrically opposed to U.S. and GVN priorities, as revealed by actual operation of the Revolutionary Development (RD). The objectives of RD are: security; better administration; public works projects, such as construction of schools, roads, bridges, markets, wells, and latrines; medical services; and agricultural extension, providing instructions in farming methods. Only lip service is paid to the enforcement of ceilings on the rent paid by the tenant. There is no attempt to increase ownership of land. The RD program stresses the need for credit, but according to the Lillienthal Report, government credit has probably not been available

¹SRI, Land Reform in Vietnam, Vol. V, p. 100.

Table 11
THE MOST SERIOUS PROBLEMS OF THE FARMER RATED, III AND IV CORUS^a

Problem or Need	Owner-				Farm		Total Sample	(Landlord)
	Owners	tenants	Tenants	Workers	Workers			
Number of respondents:	226	47	188	93	554			(36)
<u>Percentage Expressing a Need</u>								
1. Land	23	26	45	62	37			(8)
2. Credit	36	23	37	42	36			(31)
3. Agricultural inputs ^b	28	34	22	16	25			(11)
4. Security or peace	19	19	10	3	13			(36)
5. Public works ^c	7	9	6	3	6			(11)
6. Better administration	3	4	3	0	2			(8)
7. No needs	6	13	7	3	6			(11)
8. Miscellaneous ^d	15	23	13	12	14			(19)

Notes:

In each column the sum of percentages is greater than 100, because some farmers mentioned more than one need.

^aBased on Table 232 in SRI, Vol. V, Appendixes. Hamlet residents who are not engaged in agriculture are omitted.

^bIncludes agricultural equipment and livestock.

^cIncludes construction of schools, roads, bridges, etc.

^dIncludes need for lower cost of living, end to defoliation, government help, and other.

"to more than 4 to 5 percent of the farmers and fishermen in the nation, although in certain provinces where special programs are centered, the number receiving loans may be as high as 15 percent of the total."¹

The surveys we have cited demonstrate either that the Vietnamese farmer does not try to maximize profit or that he and the U.S. opponents of land reform disagree on which alternative choices are most likely to result in maximizing his income. We shall describe some of the U.S.-preferred alternatives to land reform and point out that they either cannot be successfully implemented in Asia or that they primarily benefit farmers who already own land and are relatively well off. We believe that in Vietnam the income-maximizing farmer ought to prefer land reform to the alternative policies.

The Satisfied Farmer. We have presented evidence showing that the Vietnamese farmer does not lack aspirations and prefers some economic benefits to others. A third group of opponents of land reform, though willing to admit that the farmer values ownership of land and may prefer it to other alternatives, believes that, because at the present time the countryside is prosperous, the intensity of the farmer's dissatisfaction with the economic conditions is low. Tacitly assuming that the alleged low level of dissatisfaction will not lead the farmer into behavior detrimental to the interests of the GVN and the United States, these opponents ask, why should our side incur the costs associated with land reform for the sake of uncertain benefits?

The assertion about the intensity of dissatisfaction is a conjecture that probably cannot be validated or refuted by empirical research. The Stroup and SRI data do not measure the intensity of the farmer's desire to own land, and it is unlikely that other surveys can settle this question one way or another.

The prosperity of the countryside is a misleading and unwarranted interpretation of the economic indicators calculated in Saigon: the

¹Lillienthal Report, Vol. II, p. 217. Emphasis added.

prices of farm products, the use of farm inputs, and the level of employment tell us very little about the distribution of farm income, which has not been studied since 1964. We do not doubt that there are prosperous farmers, such as landowners and large tenants producing for the market, but there are also millions of displaced persons who live on a bare subsistence level.

The argument is a conditional one: if the alleged general prosperity did not exist, the dissatisfaction, it is tacitly acknowledged, may increase. Even if we grant, for the sake of the argument, that a vast majority of the farmers are relatively better off at the present time, we ought to be aware of the distinction between the farmer's present condition and his expectation of changes that may take place as the war comes to an end. As the U.S. presence in and aid to Vietnam declines, fewer economic benefits will reach the countryside. Furthermore, because the United States employs more than 150,000 Vietnamese and many additional jobs are dependent on American presence, "Many Vietnamese officials fear that the end of the war will bring widespread unemployment."¹ This apprehension must be shared by all Vietnamese. As the level of agricultural production increases, the present high prices may decline.² The rural population is apt to anticipate these changes and view landownership as the only well understood instrument for achieving economic security.

All three American perceptions of the character of the Vietnamese farmer -- the tradition-bound, the profit-maximizing, or the satisfied farmer -- invariably ignore the presence in the countryside of an antagonist highly skilled in the art of persuasion and in the use for his own benefit of the land-reform issue. We seldom acknowledge the de facto partial land redistribution that has taken place in areas controlled by the NLF, and the NLF's ability to enforce laws regulating the conditions of tenancy. Furthermore, the rural population undoubtedly

¹A. Smithies, The Economy of Vietnam, p. 43.

²If the Lilienthal report is a representative example, the American economic planning for postwar Vietnam shows little concern about problems of transition from war to peace, and the distribution of rural income.

believes that the NLF, once firmly in power, would undertake as thoroughgoing a program of land redistribution as those of China and North Vietnam, or for that matter of Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea. If the level of violence decreases and the struggle between the GVN and the NLF assumes the form of political competition, the NLF will do its best to exacerbate the farmer's dissatisfaction with the pattern of land ownership. Because -- as we have shown in preceding sections -- the contrast between the rural life in the North and South is not as advantageous to the GVN as one would wish, if there is an election in which the GVN and NLF participate, many of the poorer farmers, expecting a more prosperous life under the communists, may vote for the NLF.¹

U.S.-Preferred Alternatives to Land Reform

We seldom inquire how effective various economic policies for rural Vietnam are in promoting two distinct objectives: increases in productivity and a more equitable distribution of income. Increased productivity need not result, especially in the short run, in a flow of benefits to those segments of the rural population whose income, for political reasons, ought to be increased. Though the rhetoric in Vietnam alleges that the GVN does and will provide a better material life than the NLF, the present and proposed economic policies are designed mainly to increase production; there are few provisions for changing the pattern of income distribution and only expressions of hope,² to be taken on faith, that the benefits of development will reach everybody.

¹We have noted earlier that under Diem there has been no attempt to inform the rural population about the collectivization and the quality of life in Northern cooperatives. We have not heard of any such efforts since 1963. How many farmers at the present time are informed about the rural life in the North is an open question. (See footnote 5 on pp. 20-21.)

²Lillenthal Report, Vol. II, p. 226.

Opponents of land reform, stressing the undesirable economic consequences of a radical land reform,¹ show a predilection for alternative policies that promote economic development in agriculture and control the relationship between tenant and landlord. Capitalist farming, recommended by the Lillienthal report for postwar Vietnam, and the community development program, which is the model for the economic and political components of "pacification," are designed to increase production but in practice pay little attention to the problem of redistribution of income. Laws regulating tenancy are intended to increase the income of the tenant, but in Vietnam -- and in other countries of South Asia generally -- apparently cannot be enforced. If these statements are correct, most of the income-maximizing farmers ought to prefer land distribution to the alternative policies.

Land Reform and Decreased Productivity

Many arguments stressing the undesirable economic consequences of radical land reform are invalid when applied to conditions in rural Asia. If the landlord, like the English squire, invests in and manages his farm, the redistribution of ownership can reduce production. However, in Vietnam, and also in other countries of South Asia, the landlord breaks up his land into small holdings and rents them to many tenants. The SRI study concluded: "It may be emphatically stated that the survey findings showed that landlords as a group, whether they reside in the village or are absentees, are without functions in the sense of service to the tenant on agricultural

¹The Lillienthal Report observes, "A slogan such as 'four acres and a cow' may have been appropriate for Ireland in the nineteenth century, but is entirely unattractive for Vietnam in the twentieth." (*Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 224.) On the contrary, the surveys of rural attitudes, which we summarized earlier, suggest that preferences along the nineteenth century Greenwich meridian and the twentieth century Tropic of Cancer are identical.

production."¹ SRI interviewed resident landlords: Only 6 percent give loans for the purchase of farm supplies; 6 percent give assistance for farm improvements; 3 percent assist in other ways, such as powering or harrowing; 3 percent provide seed; 19 percent instruct their tenants about good seed; and so forth. As one would expect, the absentee landlords contributed even less. Interviews with tenants corroborated these findings; for example, 4 percent of the tenants said that they borrowed money from their landlord.² In conclusion, SRI states, "it may be expected that any land reform program that extends ownership and diminishes landlord-tenant relationship should have no significant effect on agricultural production whatsoever."³

Not only does the landlord contribute very little to agriculture, but he pays little in land taxes -- 1 percent of the yield -- and mostly escapes taxation on income derived from the ownership of land.⁴

In 1964-1965 Japan, Taiwan, and Korea -- the three non-communist countries that had experienced a radical land reform -- produced more rice per hectare than any other country in Asia.⁵

Capitalist Farming

The Lilienthal report, emphasizing the need for increased productivity in agriculture as well as a solution to rural poverty, warns against the fragmentation of large landholdings and recommends, wherever the conditions are favorable, the consolidation of small holdings into large factory-type enterprises, which could obtain large inputs of capital and modern management. Under this proposal many of

¹SRI, Land Reform in Vietnam, Vol. V, p. 89.

²Ibid., pp. 89-90.

³Ibid., Vol. I, p. 63.

⁴Myrdal, p. 1039; and Duncanson, p. 285. See also Montgomery, pp. 114-118: In 1959-1960 only 15,000 Vietnamese, including 13,500 civil servants and military officers, paid income taxes.

⁵5.2, 3.7 and 3.3 tons per hectare, respectively. (Economic Survey of Asia and the Far East, 1965, United Nations, 1966.)

the rural inhabitants would be turned into farm laborers. The solution to rural poverty, the report suggests, may be found when "enlightened employers replace the traditional landlord....Preferable objectives are fair rents for farm tenants, fair wages for farm labor, and higher production from the land for all."¹

The Lilienthal report fails to acknowledge that the two objectives, increases in productivity and higher income for all, are not always compatible, especially in the short run. The report fails to specify the incentives that would transform the traditional landlord into an "enlightened" and "fair" employer. Typically, the conversion of traditional agriculture into "factory-type enterprises" results in a migration of farm population into cities, which, in the case of Vietnam, have little industry. The farm laborers who remain seem to be least capable of organizing unions, even in developed countries, and work for low wages. In contrast, Myrdal, recognizing the problem, states that "it is as important to devise measures to protect agricultural workers as to create incentives for genuine entrepreneurship on the part of the landowners."²

The Lilienthal report also tacitly assumes that the landlord will be transformed spontaneously into an entrepreneur. Myrdal, who favors a modified form of capitalist agriculture, recognizes that in Asia the absentee as well as the resident landlord may prefer to collect rents.³

Community Development Program

The Community Development Program (CDP) is a joint attempt by the central government and village governments to develop agriculture and

¹Lilienthal Report, Vol. II, p. 226. Emphasis added.

²Asian Drama, p. 1382. Myrdal proposes distribution of small plots of land to the landless. These small holdings, a form of "non-monetized social security," would provide the poor farmer with bare subsistence income; he would still need to supplement his income by working for others. Under these circumstances "laborers would bargain (with their employers) from a position different from the one they now occupy."

³Myrdal suggests a tax system that would severely penalize the income of non-participating landowners, and laws prohibiting the future transfer of titles to non-farming, non-residents. Ibid., p. 1380.

provide social services for the rural population. During the past twenty years, some variant of the CDP has been attempted in almost every country of South Asia, from Iran to the Philippines. The political and economic components of the "pacification" program in Vietnam have, at least since 1967, included many of the components found in CDP. In 1967 two American papers recommended the extension to Vietnam of most of the components of the CDP that had been used in India.¹ Since 1967 several of the proposals have been adopted. The papers enthusiastically endorse the CDP but fail to mention a number of important criticisms leveled at the program in India.

According to the CDP, the central government defines the policy framework for development, provides the villages with loans and grants for local construction, credit for agricultural development, and a bureaucratic organization charged with providing technical advice and training and supervising the program. The village government, popularly elected, decides which projects are to be carried out, and ideally organizes and involves "the people in their own development.... If successful, the development program will help to forge bonds between the people and the government and give the population a feeling of control of its own affairs and destiny."² A less esoteric objective of the program is an increase of rural income and productivity.³

In India, the CDP has contributed to the growth of agricultural production, but, despite initial hopes that the income of all sections of the rural population would be increased, the program became in fact "a device for channelling governmental assistance to the not-so-poor."⁴ Studies of a number of Indian villages suggest that most large

¹B. R. Ferguson and E. Owens, "Revolutionary Development in South Vietnam: The Next Step," and "A Proposed Local Development Program," no author.

²"A Proposed Local Development Program," p. 3.

³Ibid.

⁴Myrdal, Asian Drama, p. 1343. We are basing our remarks on pp. 1339-1346 of Myrdal's Asian Drama, and pp. 165-176 of G. Rosen's Democracy and Economic Change in India.

landowners, a minority of small owners, and few tenants derive benefits from the CDP.¹

Several factors are thought to bias the flow of benefits.

1. Construction projects, such as roads, primarily benefit the farmers who produce for the market.

2. The landowning farmers have political connections with members of the central government bureaucracy and village government. The central government recruits many employees among the better educated and better-off landowners.² The local government, though democratically elected, is (it is commonly observed) dominated by and represents the interests of the large and small landowners.³ Consequently, both institutions tend to provide the better-off farmers with more inputs and credit.

3. From 1957 on, the Indian government decided to place primary emphasis on expanding agricultural output. The CDP tended to channel its resources to more fertile regions, to the wealthier villages, and, within them, to the better-off farmers, in part, because this allocation of aid promised to be the most efficient way of increasing output. First, the fertile soil and secure water supply of the favored regions were thought to be particularly suitable for improved methods of cultivation. Second, the better-off farmers were ready to contribute their own resources to match the aid provided by the CDP; they also had a better education and understood how, and were ready, to take advantage of the new economic opportunities. In contrast, the CDP would have had to devote greater effort if it had decided to educate and motivate the more depressed sections of the population.

Rent Control

If an income increase for the poorer farmers is sought, one alternative to the redistribution of land is the enforcement of laws

¹An Indian study quoted by Rosen, p. 168.

²Ibid., p. 176. However, in India a proportion of government job opportunities is reserved for members of lower castes.

³Myrdal, p. 1345, and Chapter 7, Section 5.

imposing rent ceilings and limitations of the landlords' freedom to change tenants. In 1955 laws were passed in South Vietnam limiting rent from 15 to 25 percent of the yield, and requiring written contracts between landlords and tenants valid for five years.

In contrast, for example, to India, which has published a number of studies of the enforcement of its laws regulating the relationship between tenant and landlord,¹ South Vietnam, from 1955 to the present, has not investigated the effectiveness of its tenancy legislation.

According to many public allegations, tenants continue to pay from 30 to 50 percent of the yield to landlords.² In the words of an official U.S. document: "...unfortunately these laws, as well as those enacted in the interim, have not been fully implemented to date." Another document states: "The central and provincial government structure...is simply not capable of administering land tenure policies." The SRI survey conducted in 1967 in secure areas of the southern region of South Vietnam indicates that on the average the rental rate was 34 percent of the landless tenant's yield.³ The SRI report adds, "There is some indication...that the rental rates are moderate to nonexistent in insecure areas, with rents climbing to 50 percent where the land is secure."⁴

Many of the countries in South Asia have laws regulating tenant-landlord relations. However, a number of studies reveal "the widespread circumvention of the laws."⁵ Even India, with its British trained civil service, failed to enforce its laws. For example, a study conducted in former Bombay state, "reported as having the best

¹ Myrdal, pp. 1323-1334.

² An illustrative newspaper report is quoted in U.S. House of Representatives, Land Reform in Vietnam, p. 10.

³ SRI, Vol. I, p. 24, Vol. V, pp. 81-86.

⁴ SRI, Vol. I, p. 24.

⁵ Myrdal, pp. 1327-1328.

tenancy legislation in the whole of South Asia...concluded that in 18 of the 20 districts investigated the provisions of the act had had no effect whatsoever."¹

Incentives to disregard the law are strong, and obstacles against violating it are weak. There are many landless peasants who compete with one another in bidding for the ricaland owned by the landlords, and GVN administrators, grossly underpaid (partly as a consequence of inflation) and viewing corruption as the normal, if not as the only conceivable, mode of operating, are willing to be compensated by the landlords for complicity in violating the law. Also, many among the upper ranks of GVN personnel are related to landlords.²

Acknowledging the inability of the GVN central and provincial administration to enforce tenancy laws, an American official recommends that the GVN agree to the "delegations of authority for land tenure enforcement" to the elected officials at the village level. However, the provincial administration plays a crucial role in selecting candidates for village and hamlet elections, and in areas where the majority of the peasants are tenants the village leadership is often left to the landowners. If this is so, it seems highly unlikely that the land-tenure laws would be enforced more effectively at the village level than they have been through national and provincial administration.

In the 19th century the Nguyen emperors tried to execute various agrarian reforms intended to improve the condition of the small landowners and landless peasants. However, all these efforts failed, because

their execution, which formerly had depended in too many instances on the great landholders and other provincial potentates, was now entrusted to the so-called notables or village councils. The astonishing administrative independence of these bodies...unfortunately

¹ Ibid., p. 1329.

² The problems of implementation and the many ways of evading the provisions of the tenancy legislation in the countries of South and Southeast Asia are described by Myrdal, pp. 1323-1334.

did not diminish their character as local oligarchies. Imperial measures favoring the small or landless peasants were seldom applied faithfully, and often not at all, if they hurt the interests of the notables, whose stronger members were customarily the mandarins and the rich.¹

Furthermore, if, partly as a consequence of U.S. influence, the GVN began enforcing its own laws regulating conditions of tenancy, the Vietnamese peasant would probably still not believe in the permanence of this gain. If a combination of acute danger from the NLF and pressure by the United States is required to motivate the GVN to enforce its ten-year-old law, is it not plausible that it will back-slide once the NLF is defeated and the United States withdraws?

It is easy enough to think of other alternative measures to reduce the cost of tenancy. GVN taxation could penalize landlords who charge high rent. However, in the absence of effective administration, a law providing for this would be as inoperative as that stipulating rent ceilings. Or the government could be empowered or even required to acquire riceland and rent it at low prices; but the effectiveness of this measure, too, would depend on the integrity of the GVN administration.

A final alternative is the distribution of riceland to the farmers -- the only income-raising device among those surveyed under the heading of agrarian reform that, once carried out,² does not depend on the incorruptibility of the government official. The advantage of a land redistribution program -- such as that imposed by the United States in postwar Japan -- resides in the fact that, rapidly, a radically new situation is created, not only in law but in fact, which even the normally suspicious farmer could predict it would be difficult to reverse.³

¹Buttinger, The Smaller Dragon, p. 281.

²We discuss some of the problems associated with carrying out a program of land reform in the concluding pages.

³Population increase and mortgaging of land to money lenders can in the long run result in fragmentation and alienation of landholdings.

LAND REFORM IN 1969: OPPORTUNITIES AND RISKS

In June 1969 the GVN Minister of Agriculture and Land Reform, with reported support from President Thieu, revealed a plan for a comprehensive land reform.¹ There have been no reports, as of this writing, of the Assembly and the Senate's reactions to the proposed program. USAID has allocated funds for the support of the land reform.

The beginning of a new program of land reform in Vietnam will provide the GVN with an opportunity -- through an extension of land-ownership to heretofore landless families -- to increase the rural population who can be persuaded that their self-interest is inconsistent with an NLF victory. On the other hand, depending on the nature of the reform, the GVN exposes itself to some risks. If an equalitarian land reform is defined as one which distributes all arable land free of charge, provides the largest number of farmers with reasonable allotments of land, and minimizes the number of poorer farmers who either do not benefit from the reform or are worse off than before, the differential between an equalitarian reform and the actual reform can be exploited by NLF propaganda.² This differential may be very large, as in the case of Diem's reform, or relatively unimportant, as it was during the Japanese land reform. In either case, the communists will claim that the reform had been a fraud and a deception, a mere device to prevent a real land reform, such as had been carried out by the Bloc countries.³ The effectiveness of such propaganda is likely to decline as the differential between an "ideal" and actual land reform decreases.

The Opportunities

A program of land reform, if carried out successfully, can be used by the GVN to persuade the Southern farmer that his income would

¹E. Pond, The Christian Science Monitor, June 16, 1969.

²On p. 47 we have described some of the reasons for the unfavorable reaction to Diem's land reform.

³Dore, Land Reform in Japan, pp. 460-462.

be substantially higher if the GVN instead of the Front wins the war, and that this radical change in GVN policy makes additional reforms, political as well as economic, more likely.

The 1967 policy statement of the NLF promises "to enact the land policy, to carry out the slogan 'land to the tiller,' 'to make the people rich,' and 'to protect the right to ownership of the means of production and other property of the citizens under the laws of the state.'" ¹ Now the GVN would not be constrained by its present reluctance to acknowledge the Northern and NLF land reforms and could plausibly argue that, by analogy with the development in the North, an NLF land reform would sooner or later give way to collectivization, a low standard of living, and a regimented life.

The GVN should describe to the rural population in the South the quality of life in the North. However, because the Vietnamese have been exposed for many years to propaganda from both sides, they have probably learned to discount all assertions. To overcome this immunity to words, the GVN statements about rural life in the North should be essentially true, restrained and sober in tone, and if possible verifiable. ² The life on the collectives should be described in great detail, and abstract terms, such as communism, should be avoided.

The suggested program of persuasion must not evolve into one more futile and possibly counterproductive exercise in "psywar." Ralliers who have lived in the North are, as eyewitnesses, the only competent rapporteurs. However, one should avoid selecting either the doctrinaire apologists for communism or those who cannot divorce a factual description of the North from their present hatred for the regime they once served. Rand interviews show that there are many ralliers who have retained an objectivity which makes their narration credible.

¹A translation appeared in the New York Times, Friday, December 15, 1967.

²The need for making the propaganda credible is discussed on p. 5.

The GVN could also remind the rural poor of South Vietnam that it has reduced inequality and provided them with economic security -- two themes that seem to appeal to the Northern farmer.

Finally, after years of broken GVN and U.S. promises, an equalitarian land distribution would be a dramatic sign that our side can change and make less implausible the up-till-now discredited promises of further reforms, especially political ones, that cannot be accomplished quickly.

If the current negotiations bring about a drastic reduction in the use of force and if the future of the South comes to depend in part on the preferences of the population, the acts and associated message we have described would quickly convert the GVN into a serious contender of the NLF.

The Risks

The GVN administration and legislature may deliberately limit the benefits of land reform through legislation. For example, raising the limit from 10 to 30 hectares would deny landownership to up to 160,000 households and benefit 10,000 landlords in III and IV Corps.¹ On the other hand, because land reform is a complex process, the GVN may, unintentionally, write laws that have unforeseen and undesirable consequences or entrust their execution to organizations that have a vested interest in preserving the present pattern of landownership.

To avoid as many unintended consequences of land reforms as possible, both the Americans and Vietnamese should review the lessons that can be drawn from the reforms carried out in Japan, Taiwan, and Korea. Certainly there will exist in Vietnam some specific problems that were not encountered in the other countries; but many of the problems first met during the implementation of land reform in Japan, for example, are likely to be relevant in Vietnam.

¹SRI, Vol. I, pp. A-38, A-39.

At the present time no critical comparative study exists which summarizes the problems common to these three countries of the Far East.¹ Even the studies of individual countries are of an uneven quality. At a minimum, an advisory institute should be formed consisting of Japanese, Koreans, Chinese, Americans, and Vietnamese who have participated in or closely studied the process of land reform. Anticipating problem areas, the advisors would be better prepared to suggest necessary provisions of the legislation. Furthermore, studies of the performance of organizations that executed land-reform legislation in the countries of the Far East may help to define the characteristics of more efficient organizations for Vietnam. We would also like to see experts from these countries participating on the operational level, when the GVN begins to carry out its new land reform.

We conclude with some lessons learned from the Japanese land reform,² most of them relevant to Vietnam.

Legislation

When it became apparent that land reform was unavoidable, the opposition in the legislature tried to modify the proposed law in order to weaken it. They attempted to raise the maximum limit on holdings that could be retained by landlords. A proposed change in the definition of landholdings subject to transfer would have enabled the landlords to avoid compulsory sale to the government by distributing land titles among members of their household. "The definition of 'absentee landlord' was loose and would have permitted many evasions.... The constitution of the Land Committees which were to supervise the work was such as to make it likely that they would be dominated by landlords." These attempts were unsuccessful, because the Americans privately intervened and were able to agree with the Japanese cabinet on a mutually satisfactory formulation of the legislation.³

¹According to Dr. William Bredo, project director of the SRI study.

²According to R. P. Dore, Land Reform in Japan.

³Ibid., p. 136.

Execution

Dore points out that "not even the most detailed law could be expected to deal adequately with all the complexities of Japanese agriculture. New problems were constantly arising."¹ Consequently,

...however complete the law, in the very nature of the case its evasion -- either by ignoring it or by the falsification of documents -- was by no means difficult. A great deal was left to the discretion of local Land Committees, and whether the law was applied with conscientious thoroughness or with a laxity which amounted to a complete perversion of its purposes depended chiefly on the composition of these Committees. It depended also on the power structure of the villages and the general consensus of opinion which provided a background to their work, and on the extent to which control and guidance was exercised by prefectural officials and was exercised in the direction of unyielding adherence to the spirit and the letter of the law.²

The execution of land reform was not turned over to the village government, which in Japan as in Taiwan and other countries of Asia reflected the interests of the landowners. Instead, elected Land Committees were formed at the village, town, prefectural, and central government levels. The Land Committees reserved five of the ten seats for tenants, three for landlords, and two for owner-cultivators. These representatives were not elected by all villagers but by three separate constituencies; that is, the tenants alone were permitted to vote for the five persons who represented them.³

In many villages the Land Committees provided equitable representation to the various classes of farmers and faithfully carried out the provisions and intentions of the land reform legislation. However, there were exceptions. An extreme example occurred in Tanabe village. When the time came for elections of the Land Committee, "the informal leadership of the village decided on a 'rational allocation' of the ten seats between the various hamlets which made up the village, and to avoid the 'unpleasantness' of an election in which someone was

¹ Ibid., p. 149.

² Ibid., p. 150. Emphasis added.

³ Ibid., p. 140.

bound to be defeated, ten candidates were chosen by a 'general consensus' of landlord-dominated opinion. Others who had the intention of standing for election were persuaded to withdraw. The union was bought off by allowing two of its members to become candidates. The other three tenant representatives and the two owner-cultivator representatives were loyal landlords' men. The younger brother of the village mayor, landlord of a large holding like his elder brother, was elected chairman."¹

The Prefectural Governor ordered that the Tanabe Land Committee be dissolved and new elections held, but the new Committee was not substantially different from its predecessor. Finally, under the pressure of prefectural officials and the threat of American intervention, land reform was carried out in Tanabe by the Prefectural Land Committee.²

The example of Tanabe village demonstrates that in some cases land reform cannot be carried out without the intervention of the territorial and central government. And it must be remembered that "brooding over all was the spirit of the Occupation."³ In fact, in all three countries there was brooding over all a MacArthur, a Chiang Kai-shek, and a Syngman Rhee. Whether President Thieu and the American officials in Vietnam, burdened with their legacy of opposition to land reform, are willing and able to play an analogous role remains an unanswered question.

CONCLUSION

1. If the differential between equalitarian -- as defined earlier -- and actual GVN land reform is small, the GVN can credibly demonstrate to the Southern farmer, by describing the execution of communist agrarian policies and the resulting quality of the life in the North, that the GVN reform is vastly preferable to a Northern one.

¹Dore, p. 154.

²Ibid., p. 155.

³Ibid., p. 171.

The GVN can also point out that the realization of an equalitarian land distribution would be a dramatic sign that our side, after years of broken promises, can change, and, consequently, would make less implausible the up-till-now discredited promises of further reforms, especially political ones, that cannot be accomplished quickly.

The life in the North should be described in concrete detail by ralliers who have lived in North Vietnam and can speak with sober objectivity of the regime they once served.

Land reform together with a program of persuasion would make a GVN victory appear economically advantageous to poor and middle-class farmers. The perception of differential advantages to be derived from a GVN victory is likely to decrease the rural population's withdrawal, in sentiment and action, from the political sphere. This may be particularly advantageous to the GVN if the current negotiations in Paris lead to a substantial reduction in violence and if a resolution of the contest between the two sides comes to depend on the preferences of the Vietnamese population.

2. If the differential between equalitarian and actual reform is large, the GVN will be able to derive few advantages and will become vulnerable to NLF propaganda. We offer a number of provisional suggestions for minimizing the differential.

To anticipate and devise solutions to the many problems that are bound to arise in the course of a program of land reform, the Americans and the GVN should form an advisory institute that would review the lessons to be drawn from land reforms in other countries. Also, experts from Japan, Taiwan, and Korea might participate on the operational level, when the GVN begins to carry out its new land reform.

Opposition to land reform on the local and national level will decline if the sale of land appears advantageous to the landlord. In Japan the compensation offered to the landlords, together with inflation, resulted, in effect, in confiscation of the land. The landlord received in 1948, in real terms, less than 1 percent of the 1939 market

price of land." As indicated earlier, 78 percent of a sample of interviewed landlords would either welcome, or at least not oppose, a program of land reform, if it were "fair and equitable." One might expect that the present uncertainty as to the outcome of the war would lower the compensation that would be deemed fair and equitable.

The influence of landlords opposed to land reform can be reduced by entrusting the execution of the law to a new local elected body patterned after the Japanese village Land Committees. A majority of the seats should be reserved for representatives of tenants, former-tenants, and farm laborers. These representatives would be elected by three or four separate constituencies of farmers.

Though the Land Committee would be an improvement over the present village government, it may fail to function in some villages, as it happened in Japan. A national administration, determined to carry out the program of land reform, must be willing and able to intervene, if necessary, whenever the local Land Committee fails to function.

¹Dora, p. 119.

Appendix A

CALCULATION OF NATIONAL PRODUCT FOR NORTH VIETNAM

The source for the data used in the following calculations is Ho Lien Thong Co 1961 (Hanoi: 1964), issued in translation as 1965 13,715, 1961 Statistical Data (1966). We interpreted "Gross Product" and "National Income" as, in Soviet and Chinese terminology, gross and net material products (GMP and NMP), respectively, and "Capital Invested in Basic Construction," shown on page 43 of the translation, as gross investment.

The sum of NMP, services, and depreciation equals gross national product (GNP), and the sum of net material product and services equal net national product (NNP), as defined in the West.

A. Becker and K. C. Teh of Rand have estimated depreciation and services:

	<u>K. C. Teh</u>	<u>A. Becker</u>
Services	15 percent of NMP	0.1 trillion piasters
Depreciation	1 percent of GMP	10 percent of the difference between NMP and GMP

The calculation of GMP, NMP, and net investment is shown in Table A-1.

In India, according to United Nations data, 15 percent of NMP is payment for services.

K. C. Teh and K. C. Teh, The Economy of the Chinese Mainland: National Income and Economic Development, 1953-1959 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 61, depreciation is approximately 1 percent of the domestic product. This suggests that depreciation in North Vietnam in 1960 might be 1 percent of 1.3 trillion piasters = 1.3 billion piasters. For 1960, capital consumption in South Vietnam was estimated to be 1.5 percent of NMP.

Table A-1

CALCULATION OF NORTH VIETNAMESE NET INVESTMENT, NNP, AND GNP
(Billions of North Vietnamese piasters)

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Gross Product			
= Gross Material Product	4.7	6.0	6.2
National Income			
= Net Material Product	2.83	3.55	3.63
Gross Investment	0.66	0.73	0.71

Estimates of:	<u>Yeh</u>	<u>Becker</u>	<u>Yeh</u>	<u>Becker</u>	<u>Yeh</u>	<u>Becker</u>
(1) Services	0.5	0.1	0.68	0.1	0.69	0.1
(2) Depreciation	0.05	0.2	0.66	0.25	0.06	0.26
Net Investment	0.61	0.46	0.67	0.48	0.65	0.45
Net National Product	3.33	2.93	4.23	3.65	4.32	3.73
Gross National Product	3.36	3.13	4.29	3.90	4.38	3.99
<u>Net Investment</u> = <u>Net Product</u>	182	162	162	132	152	122
<u>Gross Investment</u> = <u>Gross Product</u>	202	212	172	192	162	182

Appendix B

CONVERSION FACTORS FOR SECONDARY CROPS

	Kg of Paddy per Kg of Secondary Crops	
	(1)	(2)
Sweet potato	0.5	0.25
Manioc-cassava	0.5	0.25
Corn	1	1
Beans	1	1

(1) U.S. Department of Agriculture states that Hanoi used these conversion factors after 1959.

(2) Conversion factors used in U.S. Department of Agriculture publications.

Appendix C

PRODUCTION OF FOOD CROPS IN NORTH VIETNAM
(million metric tons)

Year	Fall Crop		Total Paddy		Secondary Crops		Paddy + Secondary Crops		Population in millions
	Yield in m.t./h.	Area in hectare	Total m.t.	Per capita in Kg/year	Total m.t.	Per capita in Kg/year	Total m.t.	Per capita in Kg/year	
1939 production									
official est.:	1.36	1.14	2.47	207	0.26	22	2.73	230	12
P. Gourou's estimates									
1954	1.50	1.21							(1.29)
1955	1.70	1.38	3.52	274	0.59	46	4.11	320	(13.4)
1956	1.82	1.41							(13.8)
1957	1.84	1.35	2.95	277	0.64	45	4.59	320	(14.3)
1958	2.38	1.41	4.58	310	(0.67)	45	5.25	355	(14.8)
1959	2.40	1.43	5.19	336	(0.70)	46	5.89	380	(15.4)
1960	2.04	1.43	4.20	270	0.73	46	4.93	315	15.9
1961	1.98	1.50	4.65	280	1.17	71	5.82	350	(16.5)
1962	1.98	1.48	4.54	268	1.19	70	5.73	340	(17.0)
1963	1.88	1.46	4.30	245	1.27	73	5.57	320	(17.6)
1964	1.84	1.50	4.50	248	1.58	87	6.08	335	(18.2)

Note: Figures in parentheses are extrapolations of North Vietnamese data.

Appendix D

PRODUCTION OF FOOD CROPS IN SOUTH VIETNAM^a (in million metric tons)

Years	Paddy Rice				Secondary crops n.m.t.	Paddy + Secondary crops - rice exports Consump- tion /yr in Kg	Popula- tion in millions			
	Fall Rice		Total Crop							
	Yield in m.t./h.	Area in hectare	Produc- tion	Export						
1957-1958			3.2	.11	3.1	230	(0.2)	3.3	246	13.4
1958-1959			4.2	.25	3.95	285	0.2	4.1	297	13.8
1959-1960			5.1	.34	4.75	335	0.25	5.0	355	14.1
1960-1961	2.2	2.1	5.0	.15	4.85	335	0.28	5.1	352	14.5
1961-1962	2.0	2.1	4.6	.08	4.5	300	0.33	4.8	324	14.8
1962-1963	2.2	2.2	5.2	.32	4.9	320	0.38	5.3	349	15.2

Notes:

^aThe secondary crops were converted to rice equivalent weight using conversion factors used in the North. Rice exports, secondary crops production and population are for the calendar years 1958-1963. Rice production is given for FY1958 through FY1963.

^bWe assumed that rice exports are given in terms of paddy.

Source:

U.S. Agency for International Development, Annual Statistical Bulletin, No. 10, Joint Economic Affairs Office, June 1967.

Appendix E

FOOD PRODUCTION IN SOUTH AND NORTH VIETNAM

Livestock, in Thousands
(average for 1959-1962)

	<u>South</u>	<u>North</u>
Cattle	1,040	856
Hogs	3,150	3,850
Poultry	28,000	45,500

Fish Catch, in Thousands of Metric Tons

	<u>South</u>	<u>North</u>
1955	52	94
1961	--	223
1962	--	289 (planned)
1963	365	--

THREE ORDINARY-LEAST-SQUARES ESTIMATES OF THE REGRESSION MODEL, USING GOVERNMENT CONTROL DATA AS THE DEPENDENT VARIABLE, FOR 26 PROVINCES, DECEMBER 1964^a
(control measured by percentage of province hamlets secure)

Notes:

b Not reported.

Not statistically significant by conventional single-tail "t" test at 5-percent confidence level.

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